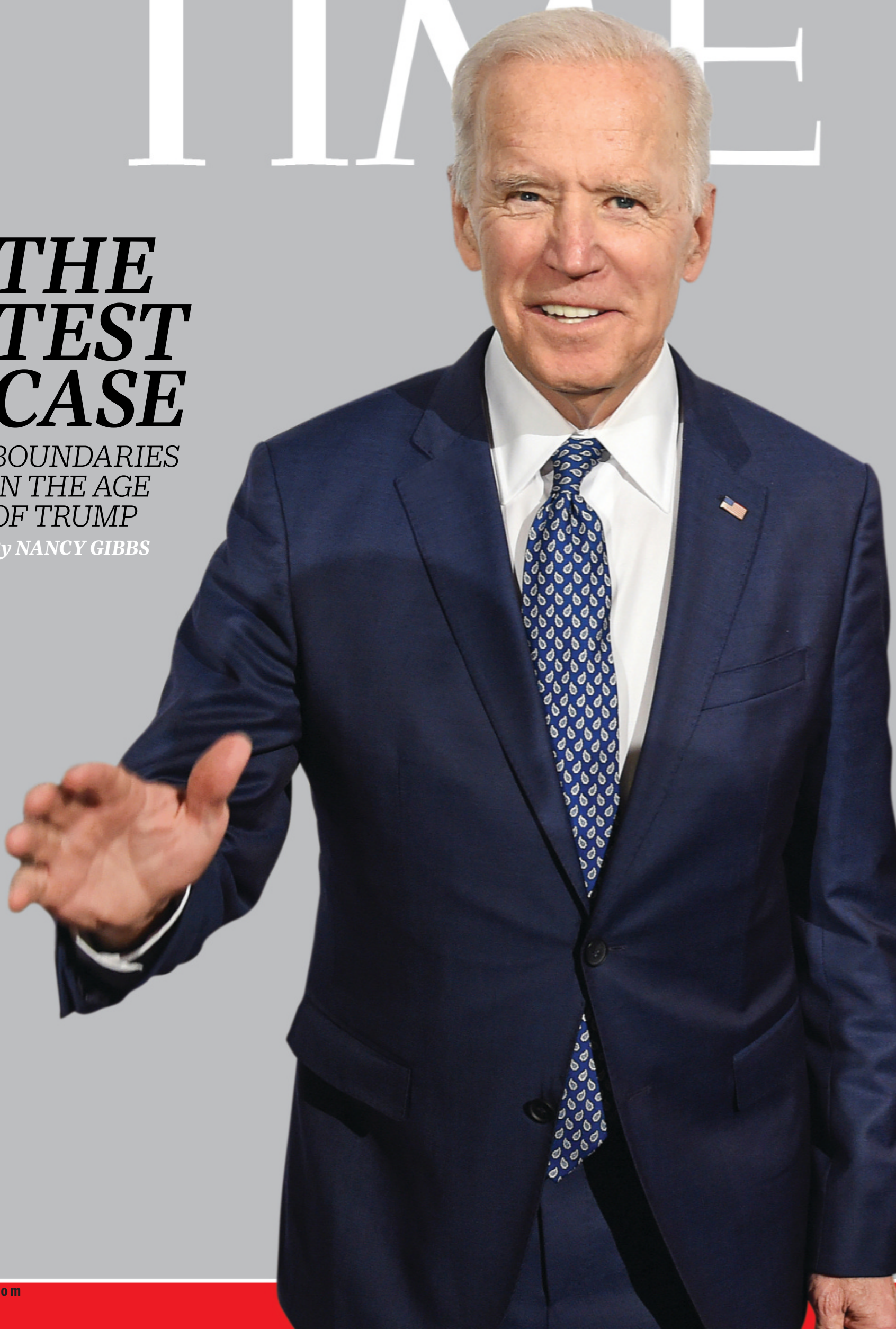
APRIL 15, 2019

TIME

THE TEST CASE

BOUNDARIES IN THE AGE OF TRUMP

By NANCY GIBBS



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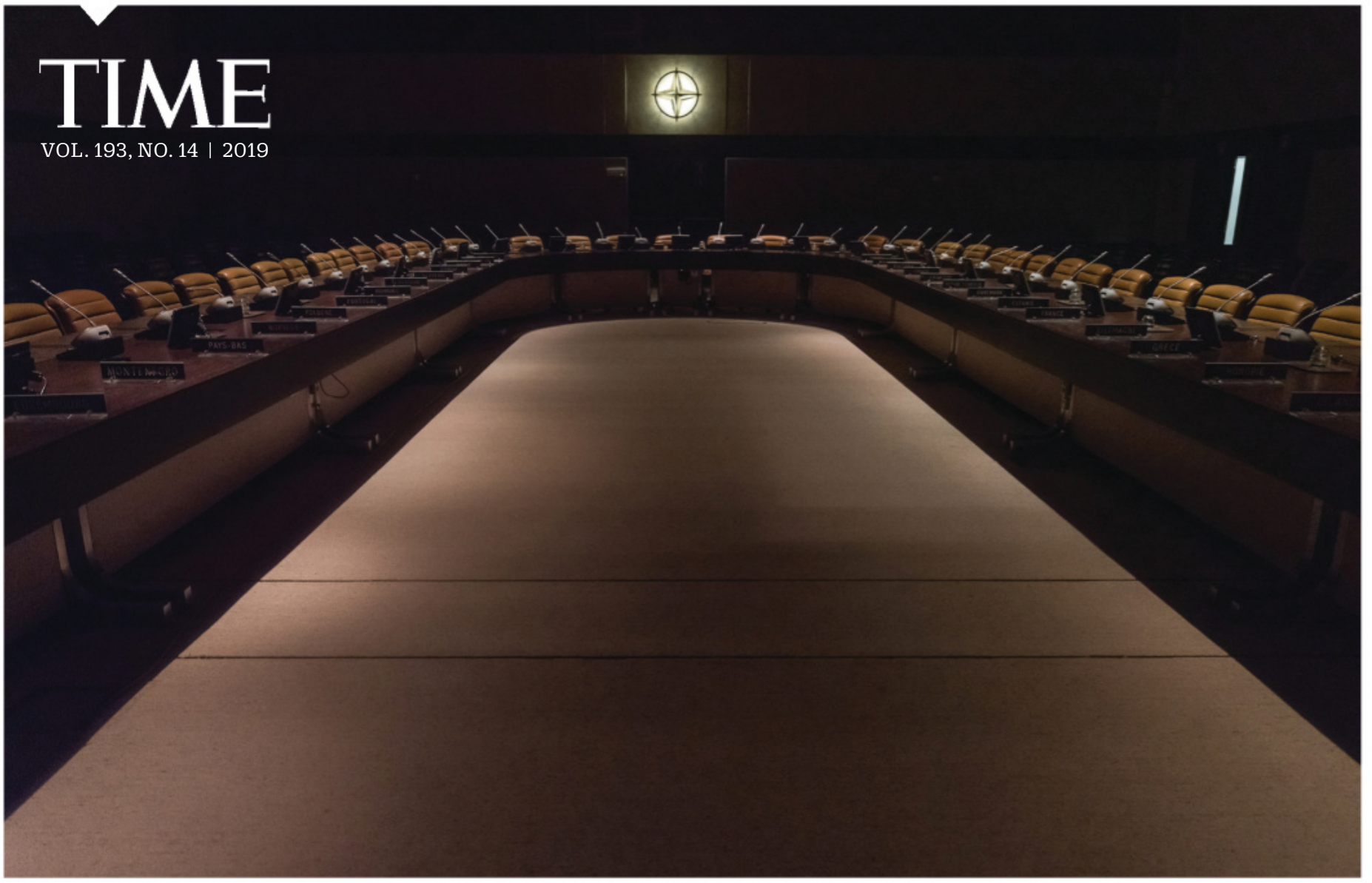

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A meeting room in the old building of NATO's Brussels headquarters

Photograph by Carl De Keyzer—Magnum Photos

ON THE COVER: *Photograph by Andreas Gebert—Picture Alliance/Getty Images*

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WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT ...

JUST SINGIN' Readers differed on the April 8 cover story about special counsel Robert Mueller's report. While some, like Elizabeth Hinesley of Delray Beach, Fla., saw the news as "validation" for President Trump, others thought it was premature to frame the news as a win for him, with JosefineAnne Gobreville of Los Angeles writing that there can be "no indication that Trump is 'victorious'" until the full report is seen. Richard Sutherland of Winter Haven, Fla., pointed out that no matter what the report says, Americans can still express their opinion of Trump through the way they vote in the 2020 presidential election. "Democracy anticipates conflict," he wrote, "but its method of resolving conflict is through a peaceful process called elections."

'TIME's artist forgot to place a banana peel under Trump's foot.'

JAMES F. FRYER, Hayward, Calif.

WHAT TERROR CAN'T DIVIDE For international editions of the March 15 issue, to accompany a cover story about shootings in Christchurch, New Zealand, TIME turned to artist Ruby Jones of Wellington, New Zealand. Her cover illustration of people standing in unity moved readers around the world. On Twitter, @khanofleeds called the animated version "sublime and beautiful, very emotional to watch," while @evenbev said the style was reminiscent of illustrations from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince*. Readers were also moved by New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, with @nadeema tweeting that Ardern's response to the tragedy was an example of "how to lead a nation."

'Love this so much. Ruby is a light for all of us. Thank you.'

@ERIKARAZZAQUE, on Twitter

TIME 100 Every year, TIME recognizes the world's 100 most influential people. They are artists, leaders, scientists, activists and entrepreneurs who've made a difference over the past year—for better or worse. And though the editors choose the final list, which will be announced on April 18, we want to hear who you think should be included. The 2019 TIME 100 reader poll is open until April 16 at midnight E.T., and leading candidates so far include *(below, clockwise from top left)* Serena Williams, Xi Jinping, Emilia Clarke, Cardi B, Meghan Markle, Jeff Bezos, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Donald Glover, LeBron James and Donald Trump. Cast your vote at **time.com/time100poll**

$590K

Difference between the total amount earned by a typical American woman who works from age 16 to 70 and the higher amount earned by a man working an identical span. For Equal Pay Day in the U.S., TIME analyzed the disparity between average male and female wages—and how it increases with age. See more at **time.com/equal-pay-chart**

bonus TIME parents

Subscribe to TIME's free Parents newsletter for **smart tips, tools and news on parenting,** delivered directly to your inbox. For more, visit **time.com/email**

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT In "Who Will Be the Next Leader of Ukraine?" (April 8), we misstated where a 2017 photo of Yulia Tymoshenko meeting President Trump was taken. It was at the National Prayer Breakfast.

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‘I think I’d probably say no.’

BARBARA BUSH, former First Lady, when biographer Susan Page asked her in 2018—shortly before Bush’s death—whether she still considered herself a Republican

‘Are we really going to help fund the murder of innocent citizens?’

GEORGE CLOONEY, actor, calling for a boycott of hotels owned by the Brunei Investment Agency, in response to a new law in the Asian nation that legalizes the stoning of LGBTQ people and adulterers

‘I DON’T WANT TO HAVE A HEART THAT IS BOILING LIKE A VOLCANO.’

FARID AHMED, a survivor of the March 15 New Zealand mosque attacks, on why he forgives the shooter; Ahmed spoke at a remembrance service in Christchurch on March 29

‘In 2020, induct more women.’

JANET JACKSON, Grammy-winning recording artist, in a speech at the March 29 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony

‘She is an “influencer,” the “influencer” of God.’

POPE FRANCIS, describing the Virgin Mary in an April 2 exhortation to young Catholics

66 million

Estimated number of years since the meteor thought to have led to the extinction of dinosaurs hit the earth; a team of scientists claims to have found fossils from that exact day

Duke
A one-point loss eliminates the Blue Devils from March Madness brackets

Duchess
A viral online baby shower raises thousands of dollars for Meghan Markle’s favorite charities

34%

Percentage jump in the price of Hass avocados from Michoacán, Mexico, on April 2; analysts said the spike could be linked to President Trump’s threat to close the border

ILLUSTRATIONS BY BROWN BIRD DESIGN FOR TIME

SOURCES: AP; BILLBOARD; BLOOMBERG; DEADLINE; HARPER’S BAZAAR; ROBERT A. DEPALMA; USA TODAY

The Brief

The Biden Test

The Democrats' dilemma
By Nancy Gibbs

The politics for 2020
By Philip Elliott

The boss I know
By Jennifer Palmieri

PHOTOGRAPH BY SAUL LOEB

ESSAY

Whose standards will Democrats embrace?

By Nancy Gibbs

WE ALL LEARNED BACK ON THE PLAYground that whoever makes the rules of the game stands a better chance of winning it. It's an uncomfortable lesson, one that requires us to accept that norms are fluid, that expectations shift, that people's actions are not only judged as right or wrong, but are also measured against the depravity or valor of their peers.

Already it's a lesson that looms large in the 2020 campaign: Will the Democrats choose someone who can play by Donald Trump's renegade rules, or will they gamble on someone who refuses to engage on those grounds? Which brings us to Joe Biden, the would-be Democratic front runner who presents the latest challenge to Democrats trying to decide whose rules to play by.

Lucy Flores was the first woman to declare publicly that Biden crossed a line when he moved in behind her, sniffed her hair and kissed the back of her head. "He made me feel uneasy, gross, and confused," she wrote in an essay for *New York* magazine's website that launched a thousand takes. Congressional aide Amy Lappos came next. She described Biden grabbing her head and rubbing noses with her. "I never filed a complaint, to be honest, because he was the Vice President. I was a nobody," Lappos said. "There's absolutely a line of decency. There's a line of respect. Crossing that line is not grandfatherly. It's not cultural. It's not affection. It's sexism or misogyny."

Two more women followed with accounts of relatively chaste yet unwanted physical intimacy that mirrored a flood of images—unsolicited massages, too-close embraces—that spread on social media. It added up to a theme: Biden was getting too close to too many women far too often.

Some Democratic rivals praised the bravery of the women who spoke up. "I believe them and I respect them being able to tell their story and having the courage to do it," said California Senator Kamala Harris. "These individuals feel demeaned, and that's not O.K.," said New York Senator Kirsten Gillibrand. But both stopped short of demanding that Biden beat an immediate retreat from political life. House Speaker

A presidential campaign would spotlight Biden's record on gender issues, from the Anita Hill hearings in 1991, top, to his introduction of the 1994 Violence Against Women Act, center, to his controversial behavior, as in a 2012 campaign stop at a Seaman, Ohio, diner

Nancy Pelosi took a similar tack, offering staid advice to her longtime congressional colleague, suggesting that Biden pretend he always has a cold, and keep people at arm's length.

In year three of what candidate Pete Buttigieg has christened the "porn-star presidency," Biden's allies had plenty of room to run. The argument in his defense, after all, seemed obvious: How could Democrats seriously consider disqualifying the gregariously grippy Uncle Joe for his many decades of perhaps discomfiting public displays of affection, when President Pussy Grabber occupies the Oval Office? Some were quick to dismiss Biden's offenses as the routine behavior of an old-school, back-slapping, baby-kissing, glad-handing pol. He never intended to insult, much less assault, anyone, they argued. Others noted the difference between a hugger and a harasser: one is endemic to politics, a contact sport in which practitioners are judged by their perceived warmth; the other is guilty of wielding physicality as power.

UNLIKE THE MANY WOMEN who have accused the President of sexual assault—groping and kissing and hands up skirts—Flores and the three other women who spoke out against Biden did not accuse him of sexual misconduct. Other women rushed to defend him, with one calling his kiss on her head "nurturing, supportive." And unlike the President, Biden did not dismiss the women who spoke up against him as liars, but declared his need to listen respectfully. In an April 3 tweet, he struck a chastened note. "Social norms are changing. I understand that, and I've heard what these women are saying," he said. "Politics to me has always been about making connections, but I will be more mindful about respecting personal space in the future. That's my responsibility and I will meet it."

From there, the public conversation took its own course. Critics noted that Biden's statement, pointedly, did not include an apology. The question had quickly become not whether Biden's handsiness was appropriate, but whether his candidacy was viable. And in this, the nearly 50 years of his public record was suddenly under scrutiny—with different pundits' judgments based not on derivations from some agreed-upon rule book, but on the shifting norms of our complicated times. This is the man who as Senator drove the landmark 1994 Violence Against Women Act into law. Did his political style do more damage to women than his singular legislative achievement prevented? And does his advocacy for women over the years counteract, for progressives, the fact that in the '70s and '80s he consistently voted to restrict access to abortion?

Even as Biden's fate is litigated, the larger tests facing Democratic candidates come into focus. There is the challenge of the generational divide, in which a rising cohort, characterized by its diversity and tolerance, is intolerant of conduct that was long commonplace. Then there is the challenge of navigating norms in an era defined by the #MeToo movement. Perhaps Biden should have realized he was too close, too touchy. And maybe people told him so and he ignored them, believing that his embrace created a powerful, palpable bond with the people whose lives he was trying to help.

To uphold standards is to assert that they still matter; that we are a nation with values, who expect our leaders to reflect the best in us

And then there is the challenge of whataboutism—that pervasive tactic in which you accuse your adversary of doing something worse than whatever you've been accused of. It's a race to the bottom for the defensive and aggrieved, and it will be a defining feature of the 2020 campaign, animated by the fact that whoever prevails in the Democratic primaries will face a President who has said more outrageous things, done more outrageous things than any other candidate in modern memory.

So how should Democrats embrace this challenge? Should they reject strong contenders whose offenses pale in comparison to Trump's? You can almost hear veteran pols in the "whatever it takes to win" caucus howling at the prospect of a circular firing squad, of the party crippling some of its strongest contenders because of a zero-tolerance policy that has zero connection to reality. Zero tolerance, the argument goes, denies voters the chance to weigh their values, to bring to their calculation a subtle reckoning with their hopes and needs. It allows only two dimensions, all or nothing, which is not how politics works and certainly not how life works. We must walk and chew gum in our values assessment. Some things are bad but not all bad things are equal. To hold their candidates to higher standards is to unilaterally disarm against a President willing to fight dirty. They say: pick the strongest contender, forgive him or her their trespasses and then strap in for the fight.

But on the other side are the activists, the heart of the Democratic base, who have made the early race a series of apologies and litmus tests over everything from climate to Medicare to racial and gender privilege. It's long past time, they insist, that the party assert and reflect the values of a diverse electorate and challenge a system too slow to change. What good is winning on solid principles reduced to sand?

THIS DEBATE IS just the beginning. The media's coverage of this election, as always, will seek to provide context. For now, the context is the incumbent. Biden's past statements against "forced busing" will plunk on the scale next to Trump's stack of racist insults. Video of his handling of Anita Hill will loop past the Kavanaugh hearings. And it won't just be Biden. When Beto O'Rourke

PREVIOUS PAGE: GETTY IMAGES; THESE PAGES, FROM TOP: ARNIE SACHS—PICTURE-ALLIANCE/DPA/AP; JOHN DURICKA—AP; CAROLYN KASTER—AP

Flores, who supported Bernie Sanders in 2016, says Biden behaved inappropriately at a 2014 campaign event

is accused of gauzy generalities, his allies will counter with the sham of Trumpism: a promised wall still unbuilt, a health care plan unwritten, a growing nuclear stockpile in North Korea. Articles about Amy Klobuchar as a mean boss will be compared with the serial bullying of the President's Twitter feed. A replay of anything like Hillary Clinton's email furor will be laid alongside the President's non-secure cell phone and a security-unclearable White House staff. Financial scandals? Let's discuss it on the 68th floor of Trump Tower.

It may be politically satisfying, but this line of defense comes at a cost. If Democrats can't hold their candidates to a higher standard, then they are allowing the President to set the standards. Fighting fire with fire may very well burn down the house. The challenge to the 2020 candidates is addressing a nation sick of the paralyzing polarization that turns adversaries into enemies and morally bankrupts a country where leaders must win at all costs. There's a reason most candidates are choosing to talk about Trump as little as possible, and frame a positive message on their own terms.

To uphold standards is to assert that they still matter; that we are a nation with values, who expect our leaders to reflect the best in us. If Trump fails that test, it's not a reason to discard it, it's a reason to defend it. So recognize Joe Biden for the good he has done in public life and the principles he has honored, but push him to reckon with his behavior and record. Challenge Beto to flesh out his vision. Ask Bernie Sanders who will pay for free college. The candidate who can take the high road all the way to the White House will have done the country a service before he or she even takes the oath of office. ◻

POLITICS

Biden's new political reality

By Philip Elliott

JOE BIDEN HAS BEEN GEARING UP FOR A potential White House campaign since last year, scouting office locations around Philadelphia, enlisting donors and recruiting staff in Iowa and New Hampshire. In mid-March, the former Vice President let slip to a group of union members that he might need their support "in a few weeks." Former Senate colleagues who have traded phone calls with Biden said they were convinced he was ready to run.

But in recent weeks, Biden has seemed plagued by second thoughts, blowing past yet another self-imposed decision deadline. His pause has raised familiar worries. In 2016, Biden was close enough to running for President to tap a campaign manager, and a longtime aide wrote a 2,500-word announcement speech. Was he getting cold feet again?

Biden insiders say no. He is likely to mount a third campaign for the presidency soon, two advisers involved in rollout discussions tell TIME. If he does, polls suggest, he'll be the front runner to win the nomination. But Biden's apparent hesitancy suggests he's aware of what else awaits him.

In recent days, multiple women have come forward with stories of Biden touching them in ways they considered inappropriate.

Biden denies acting inappropriately. "Not once—never—did I believe I acted inappropriately," he said in a March 31 statement. "If it is suggested I did so, I will listen respectfully. But it was never my intention." He followed up with a video message on April 3 that he would "be more mindful and respectful of people's personal space, and that's a good thing."

Biden has long been famous for taking the traditional grip-and-grin of retail politics—a pat on the shoulder, a touch on the back—too far at times. His physicality has been the subject of late-night comedy routines, and the biennial swearing-in ceremonies in the Senate, which Biden presided over as Vice President, were peppered with awkward moments. In the #MeToo era, when the nation is re-examining the boundaries of acceptable behavior by men with power, questions about gender are certain to linger uncomfortably over Biden's campaign.

But it's not just his handsiness that's taken on a different hue. Biden, 76, has spent almost a half-century in public life, during which he's held a variety of positions that seem out of step with today's Democratic base. He repeatedly voted to restrict abortion access, and his treatment of Anita Hill

ETHAN MILLER—GETTY IMAGES

during Clarence Thomas' 1991 Supreme Court confirmation hearings still incenses many Democrats. His support for tough-on-crime sentencing guidelines is now seen by many Democratic voters as unjust, and he voted for the war in Iraq. It remains an open question whether a party fielding a historically diverse group of candidates will pick a white man who on Inauguration Day would be the oldest person ever to become President.

BIDEN'S DELAY IN JOINING the race has political consequences too. The absence of a front runner in the race beckoned rivals into the ring and put Biden on the defensive. He left the White House without the kind of small-dollar digital fundraising network powering competitors' campaigns, leaving him to play catch-up with a mailing list from 2007. "Democrats are so horrified that an admitted sexual assaulter is in the White House, they may hold their candidates to a higher standard," an unaffiliated Democratic strategist said.

'It's a mistake to take lightly the role of women in elections. They have fueled the Democratic Party since Donald Trump won.'

PATTI SOLIS DOYLE, Biden's chief of staff during Obama's 2008 campaign

His boosters still see a clear path to victory. Biden is at the top of early national polls, is well known and liked by Democrats, and enjoys strong support among African Americans—a constituency with clout in picking the Democratic nominee. Biden's popularity among white working-class voters, many of whom sided with Trump in 2016, is particularly tempting to those who want more than anything to win the White House. "The most important issue for Democrats writ large across the country is not some ideological stance. It is beating Donald Trump," says Patti Solis Doyle, Biden's chief of staff during the 2008 Obama campaign. "But it's a mistake to take lightly the role of women in elections. They have fueled the Democratic Party since Donald Trump won."

Allies have rallied behind Biden in recent days, arguing in op-eds and tweets that he has a long record of empowering women. But his inner circle is split on how to handle the tricky politics at play. Some insist he should defer to his accusers; others are urging him not to flinch, lest he be treated like Al Franken, who resigned from the Senate after multiple women accused him of groping or forcibly kissing them. Many Democrats now regret sidelining Franken, a fundraising powerhouse, at a moment when Republicans embrace a President with a much more problematic record with women. For now, Biden's biggest challenge is clear: he must carefully balance his long history with an aspirational future. ◻

VIEWPOINT

The man I worked with

By Jennifer Palmieri

I AM A LITTLE SURPRISED THAT PEOPLE HAVE BEEN surprised by the rough patch Joe Biden has hit in the past few weeks. The questions Biden has faced—from his handling of the Clarence Thomas hearings to his physical displays of affection—were entirely predictable. I imagine he himself predicted them.

When I was White House communications director for President Obama, I saw him express physical affection for women and men both, and he often greeted me warmly with a hug or even a kiss on the forehead. It was unusual for a work setting, yes, but in my experience, his overly affectionate behavior was his way of putting more love and support in the world. That was not every woman's experience, though. He clearly made some women uncomfortable, and now he is facing the consequences.

I have watched expectations rise around Biden with trepidation. A lot of Democrats have set their hopes on him. They anxiously eye Bernie Sanders' strong standing—as a candidate they believe to be too far left. They also see a Biden candidacy as a way to recapture the white working-class part of the Obama-Biden magic and win back those Obama voters who turned to Donald Trump. And there's a nostalgic appeal to a Biden presidency: his folksy ways feel like a tonic, an assurance that things can return to "normal."

But it was never fair to make him a vessel for Democrats' hopes and anxieties. His early standing atop the polls seems like more of a reflection of many Democrats' 2016 grieving process than a predictor of who will ultimately win the Democratic primary. No one is going to be able to return America to "normal," and no one—particularly in a field this large and talented—can enter the race in first place and expect to stay there.

Biden has already said he understands he needs to listen to the women who are uncomfortable with his behavior. And assuming he runs, he will need to answer more questions on this topic than I am sure he would like. It won't be fun for him, but that's what he will have to endure to convince voters he has learned the right lessons.

He has been in public life for a long time and has a long record—built during a period of immense social change—that has to be reconciled with the country America is today. But there is something of real value at the core of Joe Biden that cannot be denied. It is as foolish to count any candidate out at this point as it was foolish to believe any one candidate was an obvious savior.

Palmieri was director of communications for Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign and the author of Dear Madam President: An Open Letter to the Women Who Will Run the World

NEWS TICKER

Trump slams Puerto Rico as aid stalls

President Donald Trump criticized Puerto Rico's leaders as "grossly incompetent" in a tweet on April 2, after the Republican-controlled **Senate blocked billions of dollars in general disaster aid.** Democrats wanted more funds for the territory, still recovering from Hurricane Maria.

Venezuela targets Maduro rival

Venezuela stripped Juan Guaidó of his parliamentary immunity on April 2, **making it easier for authorities to arrest the opposition leader.** Recognized as the country's President by more than 50 countries including the U.S., Guaidó has campaigned for months to oust strongman Nicolás Maduro.

Georgia puts new limits on abortions

Lawmakers in Georgia passed a bill on March 29 that outlaws most abortions **once doctors detect a fetal heartbeat,** which can occur around six weeks into a pregnancy and before some women know they are pregnant. The governor has until May 12 to sign the bill, which would be one of the most restrictive in the U.S.

GOOD QUESTION

Why don't U.S. laws explicitly ban discrimination against LGBT people?

POLLS SHOW THAT MOST AMERICANS oppose discrimination against LGBT people. Many believe it is already illegal. But U.S. federal laws don't ban discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity the way they do regarding sex, race and religion. And the odds of Congress's changing that in the near future are slim.

While courts have found some protections for gay and transgender Americans under existing statutes, efforts to pass a law that explicitly makes it illegal to fire them from a job or turn them away from a business have faltered since the 1970s. On April 2, lawmakers in the U.S. House took up this issue yet again, debating the Equality Act of 2019, a sweeping bill that would ban discrimination in areas ranging from housing to public accommodations—a realm that includes public bathrooms as well as bakeries, two areas of recent contention.

The first bill of this kind was introduced in 1974. It covered only sexual orientation and faced opposition from those who said being gay is an "abomination." For the past decade such bills have also included gender-identity protections, and the latest House hearing was squarely focused on the issue of transgender rights. Republicans alleged that "biological males" could use the bill to take advantage of "biological females" in places like bathrooms. Democrats called that fearmongering.

While some argued in past years that it would be easier to pass a bill focused only on protecting gay, lesbian and bisexual people, advocacy groups and lawmakers have instead chosen to fight for a more comprehensive measure. And Democrats stayed that course at the hearing. "We can't have full equality," said Representative Ted Deutch, "if we leave people behind."

Nondiscrimination protections for LGBT people have also faced hurdles from critics who argue they are unnecessary—even though studies have suggested that discriminatory treatment is common—and opponents have argued that such laws impinge on religious freedom. The Trump Administration, for example, sided with a Colorado baker who, in a high-profile case, refused to make a cake for a same-sex wedding because he felt it violated his religious beliefs. "Religion is no excuse for discrimination," Democratic Representative Jerry Nadler said at the House Judiciary Committee hearing.

Advocates expect the Equality Act to pass the Democratic-controlled House in coming months but don't have much hope it will be brought up for a vote in the Republican-controlled Senate. Trump Administration efforts like the push to ban transgender people from open military service also lend doubt to whether the President would sign it. So despite the new push, this old debate is likely to continue. —KATY STEINMETZ

MUSIC

Striking a chord

Entertaining mosquitoes with music by dubstep artist Skrillex made them suck less blood and breed more slowly, a study published March 25 found. Here, more musical marvels. —*Ciara Nugent*

SUBWAY SYMPHONIES
In 2003, London's transport authority piped classical music into some stations in a bid to reduce crime. Within 18 months, robberies had fallen by a third and assaults on staff by a quarter.

TUNING UP
Listening to uplifting dance music may help you get over a cold. A 2008 study by researchers in Germany said 50 minutes of the music cut volunteers' levels of the stress hormone cortisol and boosted antibodies.

CANINE CHORUS
Reggae and soft rock music both help **reduce stress levels in dogs,** per a 2017 study from the University of Glasgow. When those genres were played, dogs had lower heart rates and spent more time lying down.

DOG: GETTY IMAGES; LIGHTFOOT: NAM Y. HUH—AP

HER KIND OF TOWN Lori Lightfoot greets supporters at her election-night party on April 2, after Chicagoans chose her to serve as their city's next mayor. The 56-year-old Democrat will be the first black woman and the first openly gay person to lead the third largest U.S. city, replacing two-term mayor Rahm Emanuel, President Barack Obama's former chief of staff. Lightfoot, a former federal prosecutor who has never before held elective office, secured about three-quarters of ballots in the final runoff vote. Speaking at her campaign celebration, Lightfoot said her victory showed Chicago was a city where "it doesn't matter what color you are" and where "it doesn't matter who you love."

THE BULLETIN

India gets ready for high-stakes elections in the world's biggest democracy

India's 2019 general-election campaign kicks off on April 11 with the world's largest exercise in democracy: more than 900 million eligible voters, 1 million polling stations and seven phases spread across five weeks. The drama culminates on May 23, when Indians find out if they're in for another five years of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) or whether the opposition Congress Party, which ruled India for decades after independence, has staged a comeback.

IT'S THE ECONOMY Modi came to power in 2014 promising to supercharge India's economy. But he has struggled with surging unemployment and implemented unpopular measures that hurt small businesses. The BJP was accused in January of suppressing a report showing joblessness at a 45-year high. Lately, Modi has pivoted to a national-security platform, capitalizing on tensions with Pakistan over a suicide attack in Indian-administered Kashmir. Amid tit-for-tat airstrikes, Modi's approach appealed to desires for national pride and strength.

BATTLE OF IDEAS Modi's first term also made ideology a consequential battleground: Should India be a secular country, as enshrined in its 1950 constitution, or a Hindu nation, as the BJP believes? In the past few years, nationalist sentiment has fueled a rise in divisive political language as well as violence directed at Muslims, who make up 14% of India's population. While Congress and an alliance of secularist regional parties hope to reverse those trends, most polls still point to a BJP victory.

WEB WARS More than any before, this election will play out online, with an estimated 39% of Indians owning smartphones. But as 4G coverage has swept India in the years since Modi's rise, it's also brought dangers. On April 1, Facebook said it had removed 702 pages, groups and accounts over "coordinated inauthentic behavior" in support of the BJP and Congress, and TIME has found that BJP supporters used WhatsApp chats to spread fake news. India's democracy may be unique in size, but it's not immune to the problems others face. —BILLY PERRIGO

NEWS TICKER

Iran struck by deadly floods

Iran ordered some 70 villages in a southern province evacuated after two weeks of heavy rains caused **widespread flooding and killed at least 47 people.** On April 2, Iran's Foreign Ministry said U.S. banking sanctions, reintroduced last year, had impeded relief efforts. The U.S. rejected the claim.

Trump threatens to close border

President Donald Trump on April 3 threatened to shut the U.S. border with Mexico, marking the second time in a week he called for the drastic action. His initial March 29 tweet drew **concern about the harmful economic impact** of such a move. Trump argued that "security is more important."

Underwater artifacts at Lake Titicaca

Archaeologists have discovered **an ancient ceremonial site underwater at Lake Titicaca** on the Bolivia-Peru border. Researchers said on April 1 they had found the remains of sacrificed llamas, ceramic incense burners and gold ornaments, all used by pre-Inca peoples more than 1,000 years ago.

INTRODUCED
A bill to **ban most semiautomatic firearms,** including the type used in the Christchurch shootings, by New Zealand's government, on April 1. The law would take effect on April 12 if it passes.

RULED
That an Executive Order by President Trump to allow **offshore drilling in the Arctic** is unlawful, by a federal judge, on March 29.

RESIGNED
Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, on April 2, after widespread protests followed the 82-year-old's earlier announcement he'd seek a fifth term.

UNVEILED
Reiwa, as the **name of Japan's new imperial era,** by the Japanese government, on April 1. It officially translates as "beautiful harmony."

OVERTAKEN
Apple, as the world's most profitable business, by Saudi Arabia's state oil company, Aramco, per an April 1 announcement.

BANNED
Most **single-use plastic bags,** by New York, the second state, after California, to make the move. Every county in Hawaii has also barred the bags.

AUTHORIZED
Subpoenas for **special counsel Robert Mueller's full report and underlying evidence,** by House Democrats on the Judiciary Committee, on April 3.

Varda's career ran from New Wave narrative to modern documentary

DIED

Agnès Varda

Nonpareil filmmaker

By JR

WHEN YOU LOOKED AT ME AND AGNÈS VARDA, YOU SAW A young guy and an old woman. But as I got to know her, I lost that sense of age. That's because she was always in the present, always active. Until her death at 90 on March 29, she was planning what she would do next. She was in the moment, not in the nostalgia of the great life she had. That's how she kept making it greater.

I was there for only the last couple years of that life, but we had a friendship that was more than a friendship. She told me before she died that she loved the ride we had together making our film *Faces Places,* both the laughs and the fights. We lived something that we wanted to live, fully, from the day we met. She changed my vision forever. Wherever she would go, she would take a minute to look around her. You'd see her at the brasserie on the corner and she would look at the table, at the chairs, at how the wood was aging.

Agnès was the oldest person to be nominated for a competitive Academy Award and the first female director to receive an honorary Oscar. This is for a good reason: Agnès was unique. She didn't make any concessions. She liked to try things. She looked very far ahead, but also around her—in her house, her street, her city.

JR is a photographer

DIED

Nipsey Hussle

Rapper with roots

WHEN THE RAPPER NIPSEY Hussle died on March 31 at 33, celebrities paid their respects. Rihanna saluted him on Twitter, as did LeBron James and Ava DuVernay. "I saw you as a man of respect and a don," Drake wrote on Instagram. "Rest easy."

But while the rapper had won friends in high places—and accolades, including a Grammy nomination for his 2018 album, *Victory Lap*—he was prouder of the work he did inside his own Los Angeles neighborhood, Crenshaw. It was there that he built a youth-focused STEM center, refurbished basketball courts and started a record label that signed local artists; he was vocal about combatting gang violence and championing black entrepreneurship.

Recently he bought a plaza at the corner of West Slauson Avenue and Crenshaw Boulevard, hoping to turn it into a hub of small businesses and affordable housing units. In a cruel twist, it was on that corner that he was shot dead, leaving behind a legacy of commitment to better the community that raised him. "All we demanded in our generation was that you be violent," he told *Forbes* in 2018. "In this era, we have to demand more." —ANDREW R. CHOW

VARDA: SARAH LEE—GUARDIAN/EYEVINE/REDUX; HUSSLE: MERON MENGHISTAB

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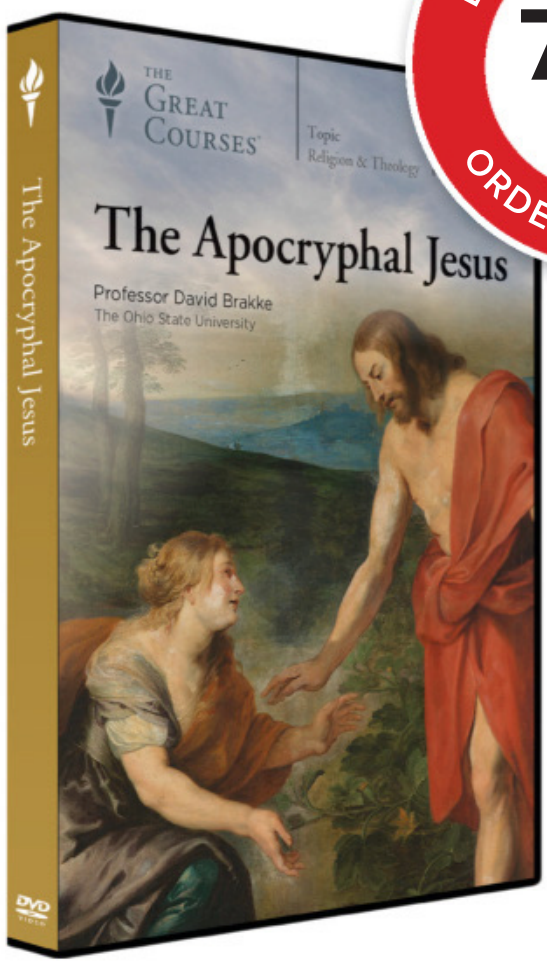

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In the land of steady habits, biographer **Robert Caro** prepares the final LBJ volume

By Karl Vick

THE DESK IN ROBERT CARO'S OFFICE HAS A rounded notch, a clean little half circle that lets him snug his wooden chair into his custom-made workstation. Instead of legs, the top rests on a pair of sawhorses. Shims raise the surface to where his elbows naturally rest when Caro's pen rolls across the white legal pads on which he writes the first drafts of his epic biographies.

The height was calibrated by President John F. Kennedy's personal physician, Janet G. Travell, M.D., a specialist in back pain whom Caro sought out after hurting himself playing basketball. Travell decided to assess his condition by watching him work. "So she sat on the floor in my office, and she said to me, 'Do you know you sat at your desk for three hours without moving?'" Caro recalled. "She said, 'I've never seen anyone concentrate like you.'" When he finished *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (1974), Caro dedicated it to his researcher, Ina, who is also his wife, and to Travell, who made possible all that would follow.

"The most comfortable position in the world is not lying in bed," Caro says. "It's sitting at this desk."

It's where America's most honored biographer has spent much of the past five decades, grinding out the first four books of what was conceived as a trilogy, the magisterial *The Years of Lyndon Johnson.* Now 83, Caro has paused in the work of the final volume to publish *Working,* a conversational, behind-the-scenes compendium addressing the questions he hears most often, starting with, Why do your books take so long to write? Eight years passed between *The Path to Power,* the first in the Johnson series, and *Means of Ascent* (1990), a dozen more before *Master of the Senate* and another 10 until *The Passage of Power,* which delivered LBJ to the White House.

The first 100,000 words of the untitled finale lie in a wooden inbox on the desk. I read the first words upside down and, since he didn't tell me not to, will report that Chapter 1 begins, "When he was young ..."

"It's the end of '65 and beginning of '66," Caro says. "Johnson is doing two things at once." He is passing the landmark legislation—Medicare, Medicaid, Voting Rights—that constitute what Johnson called the Great Society and that we just know as modern America. At the same time, the same President is sending thousands of young men to die in a war he privately acknowledges cannot be won.

"In a way, you see all the sides of Lyndon Johnson: his secrecy, his penchant for secrecy and deceit," Caro says, closing his eyes to concentrate. "And his legislative genius. He had this genius for turning or transmuting—I just wrote this—for transmuting compassion into law. A lot of politicians have liberal desires. Very few know how to turn that into laws. So it's actually, to be honest with you, it's sort of a thrilling—well, I don't say I'm writing it thrilling, I don't say I'm writing it well. But it ought to be thrilling."

Caro never says he's writing it well. But as he points out early in *Working,* his problem has always been that actually words come a little too easily to him. "You're never going to achieve what you want to, Mr. Caro, if you don't stop thinking with your fingers," a professor told him at Princeton, where he had taken creative writing. Speed was no drawback at *Newsday,* the Long Island tabloid where he excelled as an investigative reporter in the 1960s. But when he decided that the only way to explore the question presented by Moses—for 44 years the most powerful political figure in New York State, and never elected—was by writing a book, measures were taken. Caro resolved to know everything there was to know before sitting down to write. And when he did, it would be in a coat and tie, and in longhand.

"It's all to slow myself down," he says. "I was always too fast, and I wanted to make myself think things all the way through."

SO WHAT ONE ENTERS, on the threshold of the Manhattan apartment Caro uses as an office, is a controlled environment. It's a new place but doesn't feel like it. The walls are as bare as in the apartment he used for the previous 22 years, except for the corkboards that hold long, typed passages. On the ergonomic desk is the only electric typewriter he has ever used, a Smith-Corona Electra 210, mentioned in so many profiles that readers send him their old ones, which he cannibalizes for parts. (He's down to 11 reserves, from a high of 14.)

Caro types the second draft triple-spaced, to leave room for further revision, using the same brand of pencil *Newsday* stocked in his day. He also makes copies. "I got enough carbon paper for the rest of my life," he says. The duplicates go home with him each evening, to be placed above the refrigerator, his version of the cloud.

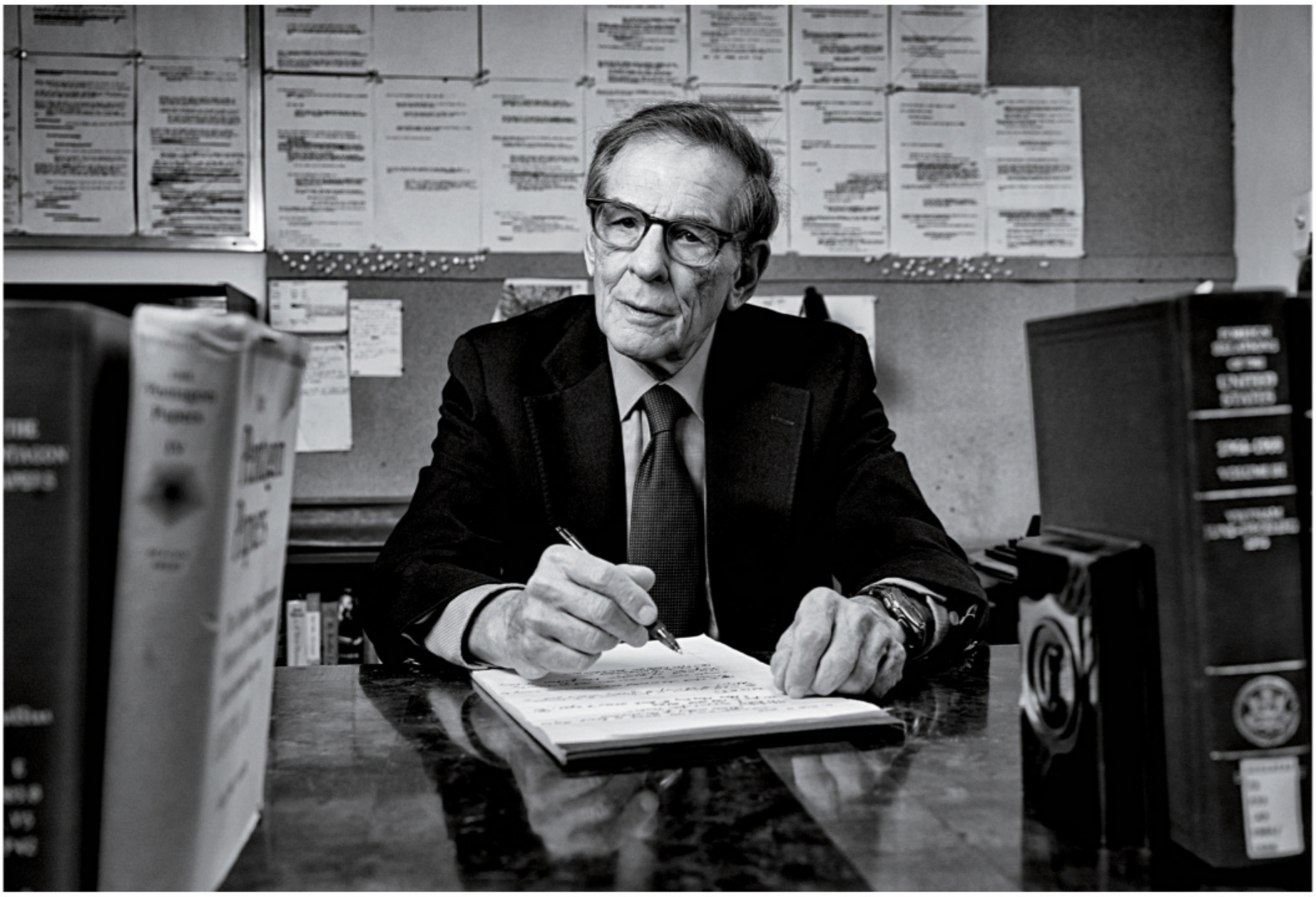
There is nothing talismanic to any of it. Just tools. An IBM ThinkPad rests on the corner of the desk, its jaws open a quarter of the way. He got it after an archivist at the reading room of the

CARO QUICK FACTS

Round numbers
Caro delivered the Moses biography at a million words; Knopf published it at 700,000.

Camping out
To appreciate the isolation that farmwives endured before LBJ brought in electricity, Caro spent two days alone in Texas Hill Country.

Vintage
Before giving up alcohol, Caro often ended the day sipping Weller 107, a sour mash favored by LBJ benefactor Senator Richard Russell of Georgia.



PHIL PENMAN

Johnson presidential library in Austin told him there had been complaints about the sound of his typewriter.

"They don't really love me down there," he says.

WHAT ANIMATES CARO, in his stillness, is comprehension. He lost his mother at age 11, and at the private school Horace Mann, he found his calling at the school paper. "I always had this desire, and I don't know where it comes from, to find out how things work and explain them to people," he says.

What fascinated him as a reporter was the nature of power, its sources, exercise and impacts. He credits his editor at Knopf, Robert Gottlieb, with putting him onto LBJ but emphasizes that what he's chronicling are stretches of America, the times that formed his subjects and that they in turn formed. How much of the segregation of New York City was captured in what Moses said to him after slamming down a telephone: "They expect me to build playgrounds for that scum floating up from Puerto Rico!" But Caro would not have been allowed into the man's office had he not been relentless, demonstrating through hundreds of interviews and years of research (he got Moses' own carbons) that resistance was futile.

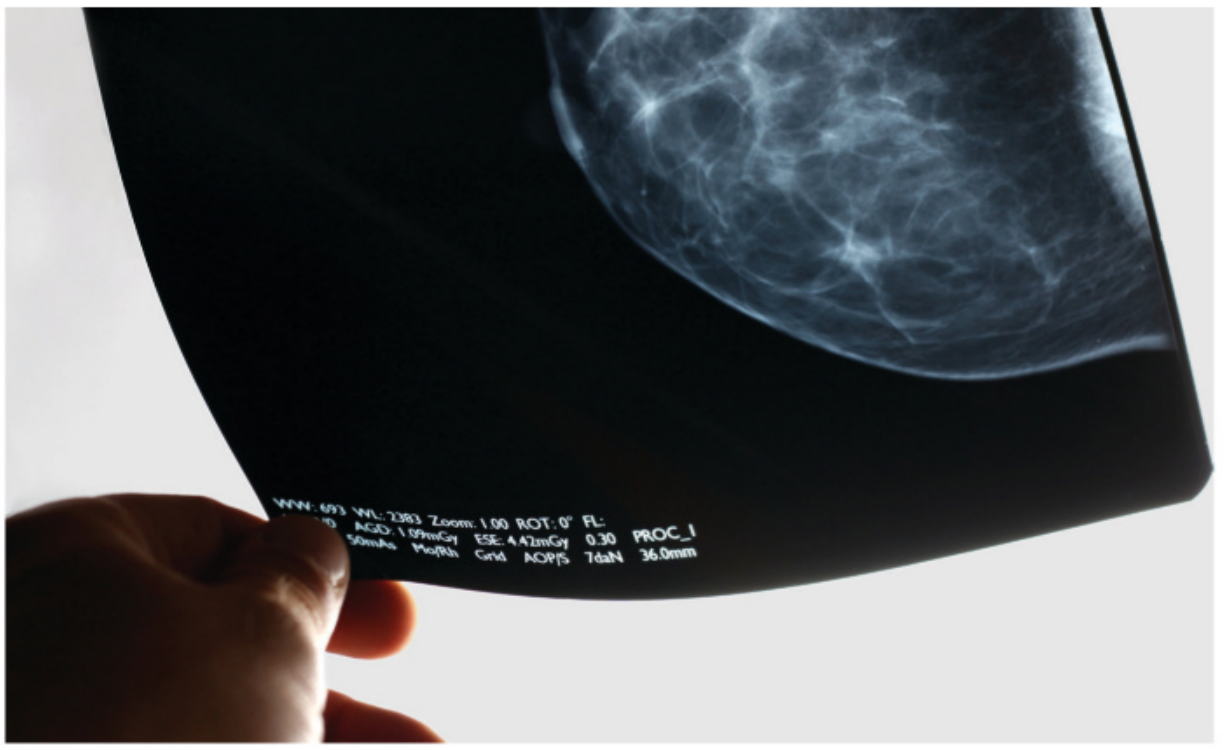
'I was always too fast, and I wanted to make myself think things all the way through.'

ROBERT CARO, on his work habits

The author reaches for a paperback of one of the Johnson volumes and flips to the back. A lawyer who was also a friend, Andy Hughes, vetted the Moses book as a favor and then was hired by Knopf to scour a couple of the Johnson volumes. But the acknowledgment on page 1,045 recognizes more than friendship: "I'm aware of all the problems that my possibly excessive attention to detail has caused."

The lawyer died a while back. "My doctor actually said to me, talking just socially, he said loneliness is an epidemic in New York City now," Caro says. "And I'm suddenly thinking how many of our friends have died. We have a New Year's Day party each year, and I had to cross off so many names …"

Caro has slowed down himself, of course. He started ending his day earlier after realizing that what he'd written in the later hours did not hold up in the morning. But he's always back at his desk at 9 a.m. "I mean I'm still working," he says. "I still do it the same way." ☐



Mammograms help doctors identify potential tumors in most breast tissue, but denser breasts make cancerous cells harder to detect

FRONTIERS OF MEDICINE

Why breast-cancer screening regulations may soon change

By Alice Park

GETTING REGULAR BREAST SCREENings is one of the best ways to lower a woman's risk of breast cancer. Scans can detect early tumors and help women get treatment before growths spread and become harder to control. But for the nearly half of American women over age 40 who have dense breast tissue, abnormalities are harder to spot. Now, for the first time in more than two decades, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is proposing changes to its mammogram regulations in order to better serve these women.

The most significant change would require doctors to inform women if they have dense breast tissue. For years, doctors disagreed on what denser tissue meant for women's risk of breast cancer, since studies weren't definitive about whether it increased, decreased or had little effect on cancer outcomes. But now, says Dr. Elizabeth Morris, chief of the breast-imaging service at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, "it's very clear that having dense breast tissue is a double whammy—you not only have a small increased risk of developing breast cancer, but with dense breasts, it's also harder to pick up that cancer on a mammogram." Only 37 states have laws requiring that health care facilities inform women of their tissue status.

The proposed changes, which also include improving the quality and monitoring of mammogram facilities, are open for public comment until June. If the update takes effect, the FDA will set a national standard for making sure that women with dense breasts are aware of their potential increased risk, so that they and their doctors can discuss options for additional screening if needed. These could include contrast mammograms, which use a dye to light up just cancer cells in the breast; 3-D mammograms, ultrasound or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) can also help detect small cancers. All of these techniques can help women start treatment earlier to lower their risk of recurrent tumors. "The proposal is recognizing the density issue," says Morris, "and shining a light on the problem." ◻

65%

Percentage of women over 40 who had recent mammograms

you asked

Why do I get sick when the seasons change?

Fall and winter are prime times for common colds, but spring ushers in another spike. That's because seasonal allergies can cause nasal inflammation, which makes it easier for viruses to "set up shop" in your nose, says allergist Dr. Bradley Chipps—and an immune system that's fighting allergens is less well equipped to handle viruses. Big seasonal swings in temperature, barometric pressure and wind can also irritate your airways and nasal passages and compromise your immune system.

People also tend to venture outside less in winter than they do in April, when it's still cool enough to encourage the spread of cold viruses, says Akiko Iwasaki, a professor of immunobiology at Yale School of Medicine.

But don't let that trap you indoors. In addition to washing your hands and exercising regularly, "keeping your nose area warm can keep your immune defenses elevated," Iwasaki says. Wearing a scarf around your face on cool spring days can really make a difference.

—Markham Heid

GETTY IMAGES; ILLUSTRATION BY MARTIN GEE FOR TIME

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MONEY

SWEETEN THE TAX REFUND

By Daniel Hemel

For most American households, April showers bring May flowers and, even better, tax refunds. In 2018 roughly 73% of individual income tax filers received money back, averaging a refund of $2,899. In many ways, that's a good thing. But it also means that millions of households are together missing out on billions of dollars.

INSIDE

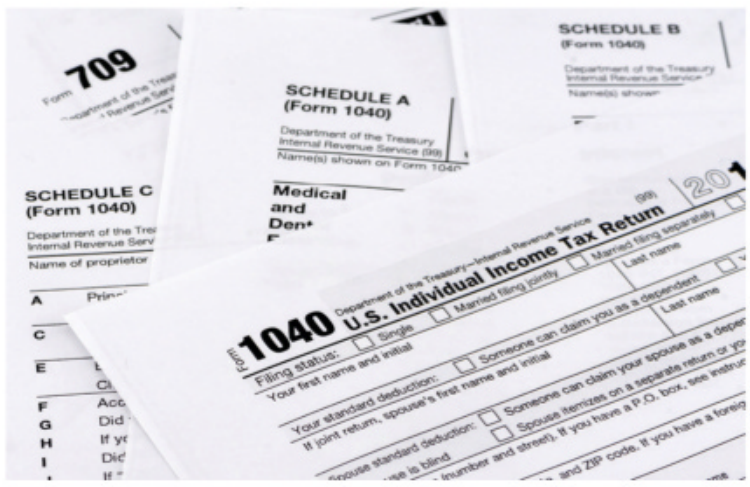
A GENDER DISPARITY AT WORK THAT WE OFTEN MISS

THE PRESIDENT OF TURKEY SUFFERS SOME MAJOR LOSSES

THE REASON THERAPISTS END THINGS WITH THEIR CLIENTS

Despite worries earlier this year about shrinking refund checks, the latest IRS statistics suggest that the share of taxpayers receiving refunds and the size of their checks are roughly in line with where those figures stood at the same time last year. This is encouraging news: our tax system functions much more smoothly when the majority of taxpayers are due a refund at filing time.

The catch is that the IRS does not pay interest to people who overpay—that is, who have more money withheld from their paychecks or who make larger estimated tax payments than what they actually owe. This means that overpaying your taxes is equivalent to depositing your money in a savings account with an interest rate of zero.



According to the IRS, 80.7% of tax returns processed through March 22 have resulted in refunds

Some taxpayers have complained over the years about an asymmetry here: since the IRS does charge interest to underpayers, why doesn't it owe interest to overpayers? They have a point: indeed, there is a strong argument that Congress should change the law so that overpayers receive interest—giving them not just a refund but a market-rate investment to boot.

THERE ARE PLENTY OF REASONS for policymakers to encourage overpayment. For one, it's a lot easier for the IRS to cut a refund check than to squeeze money out of taxpayers who owe extra at filing time. IRS employees spend millions of hours each year trying to collect taxes from individuals who have underpaid—and not always with success. Moreover, a long line of research shows that taxpayers are less motivated to engage in tax evasion when they're getting a refund.

So how can Congress encourage individuals to overpay? By using carrots (incentives) and sticks (penalties)—or both. Right now, our tax system relies chiefly on sticks for underpayment. It might make sense to add more carrots for overpayment to the mix.

The primary stick used is an interest-based penalty, which currently stands at 6%. In a typical year, taxpayers are potentially subject to that penalty if their withholding and estimated tax payments amount to less than 90% of what they owe. (Though to forgive miscalculations caused by recent tax-law changes, the IRS has waived penalties this year for filers who prepaid at least 80%.)

The threat of that penalty on top of a tax bill is enough to encourage most Americans to overwithhold. But not all income groups overpay equally. In 2017, 83% of households with incomes under $50,000 were owed refunds at tax time, while only 53% of households with incomes over $500,000 had overpaid. And overpayments constitute a much more significant share of household income for poorer families than for richer ones—about 10% for those earning less than $50,000, but below 4% for households earning more than $500,000.

The income that individuals lose in this system is modest, though still meaningful in some cases. With banks now offering savings accounts that yield more than 2% on small deposits, an individual with an average-size refund could be losing out on $50 or more that she would have earned if she had put her money in an interest-bearing account rather than handing it over to the IRS.

Of course, the taxpayer's loss is the federal government's gain. Overpayments allow it to retire its debt faster. And if the government paid out interest along with refunds, it would have to raise other taxes to cover the cost. But the IRS's nonpayment of interest is itself essentially a tax—and one that falls particularly hard on both lower-income households and those that strive to pay their taxes on time.

There is, to be sure, one group of taxpayers who already earn interest on their overpayments: those who file on time but receive their refunds late. If the IRS doesn't issue your refund within 45 days of April 15, then it owes you interest at a 6% rate too. Strangely, this means that taxpayers benefit when the IRS falls down on the job. Maybe we would all be better off with a system that inspired people to root for their government to function, rather than for it to fail.

Hemel is an assistant professor at the University of Chicago Law School

SHORT READS

Highlights from stories on **time.com/ideas**

The bad side of the parks

The idea of America's national park system is not as wholesome as we've been led to believe, writes Dina Gilio-Whitaker, author of *As Long as Grass Grows.* She explains, **"The myth of uninhabited virgin wilderness has for more than a century obscured a history of Native land dispossession** in the name of preservation and conservation."

Beyond the pay gap

Psychologist Michele Gelfand and doctoral student Virginia Choi demonstrate that people often overlook a prevalent form of gender discrimination in the workplace: **"Female employees responsible for trivial to small missteps are subject to far worse penalties than males"**—including, sometimes, dismissal.

Imprisoning the innocent

"Bail reform presents an opportunity to … have conversations about who we jail and why," write singer John Legend and New York state senator Michael Gianaris, who seek to change the system so that fewer low-income people get stuck in jail because they can't afford the payment.

THE RISK REPORT

Turkish elections show Erdogan's weakening support

By Ian Bremmer

PRESIDENT RECEP Tayyip Erdogan, the strongman of Turkish politics and a former mayor of Istanbul, has lost Istanbul. In the March 31 municipal elections, he and his party also lost Ankara, the country's capital, and several other sizable cities. Erdogan was rebuked thanks to a sharp economic slowdown brought on by mismanagement. His party, which has won every national election in Turkey since 2002, now faces a less certain future, and he may be forced to turn to the hated International Monetary Fund for assistance.

It's not that Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) has collapsed. In fact, its overall vote share in cities across the country suffered only a marginal decline. With its ultranationalist ally, the MHP, the AKP still won more than 51% of the vote nationwide, a fall of just 2% from its performance in last June's elections. Erdogan remains in command of the strong presidential system he created via referendum in 2017.

But the opposition CHP now controls cities responsible for more than 60% of Turkey's gross domestic product, and Erdogan's losses are made more embarrassing by the built-in advantages he has and by the way he campaigned. First, Turkey's media is controlled almost entirely by the government, which for the past three years has jailed more journalists than any other country. Despite Erdogan's power to shape the news the public consumes, half the voting population opposes the President and his party.

Second, Erdogan did his best to frame this election as a fight for Turkey's survival against an opposition alliance he claims is controlled by subversives, foreigners and terrorists. He promoted conspiracy theories that Americans and Europeans have sabotaged Turkey's economy. He stoked controversy on the campaign trail by repeatedly showing video footage of the Christchurch, New Zealand, terrorist attack in which 50 Muslims were murdered inside two mosques. When the governments of Australia and New Zealand protested, Erdogan railed against the fact that troops from those nations were sent to fight the Ottoman Empire during World War I.

He has continued to antagonize the U.S., in part because he accuses Washington of harboring Fethullah Gulen, a political rival who Erdogan claims has repeatedly conspired to bring down his government. Donald Trump, like Barack Obama, has refused to extradite Gulen to Turkey from his home in Pennsylvania for lack of evidence that Gulen has done anything more than oppose Erdogan's government.

He promotes conspiracy theories that Americans and Europeans have sabotaged Turkey's economy

Erdogan's accomplishments are real. He presided over a period of sharp economic growth in the first decade of this century, in part by empowering politicians and business leaders in the country's heartland to challenge the stranglehold that the major cities—Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir—held over political and economic life. He also beat back threats from the military, which has a long history of undermining elected governments to protect its political and commercial privileges. The July 2016 coup that nearly brought down his government gave Erdogan a powerful argument that his conspiracy theories were not just fantasies.

In recent years his bid to accumulate more power and to repress dissent has brought comparisons to Vladimir Putin. Voters in Turkey have again reminded their government, and the world, that Turkey is not Russia. For now, competitive multiparty democracy will continue in their country whether President Erdogan likes it or not. ◻

IRS: GETTY IMAGES; SOCIETY: ILLUSTRATION BY TAYLOR CALLERY FOR TIME

SOCIETY

Why therapists break up with patients

You may not consider this when you first step into a therapist's office, but our goal is to stop seeing you. In the bittersweet way that parents raise their kids not to need them anymore, therapists work to lose patients, not retain them, because the successful outcome is that you feel better and leave. But occasionally we have to say goodbye sooner.

The reason is what makes therapy challenging: we need to get people to see themselves in ways they normally choose not to. Of course, therapists aim to be supportive, but our role is to understand your perspective—not necessarily to endorse it. It's up to patients to take a good look at their actions.

What therapists need from patients, then, is trust that we care about their progress as much as they do and curiosity about the ways they may be unwittingly perpetuating their difficulties. If I seem to be more curious about you than you are about yourself, something's not working, and that can mean it's time to call it quits. The relationship works only if we're both doing our part.

—Lori Gottlieb, therapist and author of Maybe You Should Talk to Someone

PHOTOGRAPH BY ALEXANDER NEMENOV

Russian President Vladimir Putin gives his state of the nation address in Moscow on Feb. 20

World

PUTIN'S EMPIRE OF AUTOCRATS

Russia has quietly built a network of influence among tyrants and failed states By Simon Shuster

EVEN IN THE WORST OF TIMES, RUSSIA HAD BEEN A RELIABLE FRIEND TO THE SUDAN OF OMAR AL-BASHIR. IT CONTINUED SELLING HIM WEAPONS DURING THE ATROCITIES HIS REGIME CARRIED OUT

in the Darfur region from 2003 to 2007. And when the International Criminal Court indicted al-Bashir in 2009 for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, issuing a warrant for his arrest, Russia went its own way. Instead of detaining al-Bashir when the Sudanese leader landed in Sochi in 2017, Russian President Vladimir Putin received him at his official residence and put the meeting on state television.

As it turned out, Russia's enduring friendship was about to pay off. The outlaw President had arrived with an offer: "Sudan," he told Putin, "can be Russia's key to Africa." What he wanted in return was "protection from aggressive U.S. actions" in the region, said al-Bashir. The evidence shows Putin took him up on it. The leaders' talks opened the gates to a flood of Russian ventures in Sudan, from political consulting to mining and military aid, according to documents obtained by TIME. As Russian geologists began drilling for gold near the banks of the Nile River last year, the Russian armed forces drafted plans to use Sudan's ports and air bases as military outposts.

Sudan is just the start. Over the past few years, the Kremlin has once again been scouring the world in search of influence. In troubled countries overlooked since the Cold War, Russia has been forging new alliances, rekindling old ones and, wherever possible, filling the void left by an inward-looking West. Across Africa, the Middle East and Latin America, TIME tracked the Kremlin effort through months of interviews with local officials, Russian operatives and other players, as well as by vetting documents provided by the Dossier Center, a private investigative unit funded by Mikhail Khodorvsky, an exiled Russian businessman and critic of Putin.

The Russian campaign reaches from major conflict zones such as Venezuela, Libya and Syria to the more obscure corners of Africa and, as al-Bashir hoped, to Sudan. What comes through is a newfound

Russian willingness, even an eagerness, to involve itself in wars and cultivate regimes anywhere Moscow sees a chance to assert itself.

But unlike the Cold War, when the communist East competed with the capitalist West as equals, the new contest is being waged in an altered world. Trump's America no longer projects interest in foreign affairs, democratic ideals or even alliances. And China, with an economy eight times the size of Russia's, has replaced it as the major alternative to the West. Yet Putin has managed to keep Russia in the global picture—punching far above its weight through a combination of opportunism, bluster and common cause with isolated despots to whom Moscow offers weapons, protection and respect.

"We are not out to rule the world or impose some ideology on other countries, be it communism or capitalism," says Senator Andrei Klimov, a fixture in Moscow's foreign policy circles. "We are merely out to defend our interests. And we will do that wherever they arise."

That became clear as recently as March 23, when two planeloads of Russian troops and military cargo

PREVIOUS PAGES: AFP/GETTY IMAGES; MIKHAIL METZEL—TASS/GETTY IMAGES

SUDAN
Putin, right, with Sudan's Omar al-Bashir in Moscow in July 2018. Sudan has welcomed a number of Russian ventures, from military aid to political consulting

landed in Venezuela to shore up the embattled dictator Nicolás Maduro. The deployment was meant as a challenge to the U.S., which recognizes the legitimacy of Maduro's rival Juan Guaidó. It got Trump's attention. "Russia has to get out," he told reporters in the Oval Office four days later, adding that "all options are open" for ensuring a Russian withdrawal.

But Maduro has survived U.S. sanctions thanks in part to Russian cash and political cover. In Syria, Russia rescued the dictatorship of Bashar Assad with a military campaign that forced the U.S. to abandon its hopes of ousting him—while boosting Assad's only other friend in the world, Iran. And in the complex war for control of Libya, various factions have sought the Kremlin's support, often in exchange for access to oil fields and other resources that the U.S. also covets.

"They are specifically targeting countries that have toxic relations with the West," says Andrew Weiss, who studies Russia at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a think tank based in Washington. "They're trying to deal themselves into any conflict they can, not because they are going to solve it, but because they want influence. They want to have a voice."

The agility of the campaign has caught some Western officials off guard. Last year alone Russia made major arms deliveries to at least 23 nations. It won the rights to build logistics hubs on the Red Sea and the Suez Canal. It has struck major energy deals over the past three years with Turkey, India and Iraqi Kurdistan. Russia even brought the Taliban to Moscow last fall to try to broker peace in Afghanistan.

None of these ventures has garnered nearly as much attention as the Russian attempts to sway elections in the U.S. and Europe over the past few years. But they flow from the same well of resentment over the humiliation that followed the loss of the Cold War. And they feed a new narrative of national revival: Russia at the center of attention wherever it chooses to be, with a leader who seems unafraid to gamble and improvise in his quest to ease the West's hold over global affairs.

Helping the effort along is Trump's "America first" policy, says Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the former NATO Secretary-General. "When the U.S. retrenches and retreats, [it] will leave behind a vacuum that will be filled by the bad guys," he tells TIME. "And that's what we're witnessing now."

ONE AFTERNOON IN LATE DECEMBER, Dalia El Roubi, a rights activist in Sudan, was on her way to a demonstration in Khartoum, the nation's dusty capital, when she came upon an unusual scene. A Russian-made Ural military truck stood on the side of a road near the demonstration. A handful of European-looking men and Sudanese security personnel milled around it. "It was a very bizarre sight," she recalls by phone. "You don't see that at protests around here."

The incident only began to make sense a few weeks later, when the *Times* of London reported that Russian mercenaries were helping the regime put down a popular uprising. What began in December as a series of protests against the rising cost of food and fuel has since grown into a revolution intent on ending al-Bashir's 30-year reign. Dozens of people have been killed in the state's attempts to crush the protests, according to Human Rights Watch. Hundreds of protesters have been jailed amid widespread reports of beatings and torture in Sudanese prisons.

Just as the protests were unfolding in Sudan, the Trump Administration was rolling out a new Africa strategy. John Bolton, the White House National Security Adviser, touted it as a response to Russia and China, which he called "great power competitors" on the continent. But his proposals for facing that challenge focused primarily on pinching pennies. Rather than engage with countries that are tempted into deals with Russia or China, Bolton said the U.S. would cut off aid to punish them. "We want something more to show for

Americans' hard-earned taxpayer dollars," he said.

That approach suits Putin just fine. Having the White House refer to Russia as a great power bolsters his image at home, and it has cost him relatively little. Bolton said the U.S. still sends more than $8 billion in aid to Africa each year, much of it to help fight AIDS and other diseases, and China plans to spend $60 billion over the next three years on infrastructure across the continent. But Russia has built relationships in Africa without building much of anything—no major highways, bridges, hospitals or universities. Instead the Kremlin has focused on wooing elites: the warlords, generals and Presidents for life whose personal desires are simpler and cheaper to satisfy than the needs of their people or their economies.

Take Sudan. Since 2003, the U.N. estimates that 300,000 people have been killed amid the government's attempts to quell the region of Darfur. A U.N.-mandated peacekeeping mission was deployed in 2007 to contain the bloodshed, and the charges handed down by the International Criminal Court two years later made al-Bashir the only current head of state indicted for crimes against humanity. Only Russia has stood by his side. In November 2016, the Kremlin even broke off ties with the Court, calling its decisions "one-sided." A year later, Putin accepted al-Bashir's offer of a key to the African continent.

Among the men Putin entrusted with exploiting the offer is Evgeny Prigozhin. An ex-convict who began his career in the 1990s selling hot dogs in St. Petersburg, he has evolved into a catering executive, responsible for feeding guests at state dinners and filling the mess halls of the Russian military with cheap cutlets and buckwheat stew, according to his official biography. The man known in Moscow as "Putin's chef" is also a master of covert warfare, according to the U.S. government, responsible for a network of Internet trolls who were paid in 2016 to pose as Americans on social media. Investigations in the Russian and Western media have also identified him as the backer of a private army known as the Wagner Group.

Some of the most damning claims about Prigozhin come directly from special counsel Robert Mueller. As part of his investigation of Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. Presidential election, Mueller indicted Prigozhin early last year for staging a campaign of disinformation aimed at swaying the vote in Trump's favor. The businessman has denied those charges in florid terms. "There's an old saying," he wrote in response to journalists' questions about his work outside of catering. "Don't stick your nose where a dog wouldn't stick its c-ck."

Prigozhin's fingerprints are also on a number of ventures in Sudan and elsewhere in Africa, according to the documents TIME obtained in February and interviews with his current and former associates. In addition to gold and mineral mines, his companies have offered dictators a broad range of consulting services. One strategy brief outlines a road map for reforming Sudan's entire bureaucracy, from its tax and customs bureaus to its central bank. Its co-author, who spoke to TIME on condition of anonymity, confirmed he had been hired to prepare the strategy by one of Prigozhin's firms. "We never dealt with him directly," said the co-author, a well-known political consultant in Russia. "But we knew it was for him." Prigozhin did not respond to TIME's requests for comment via his companies and his lawyer.

RUSSIAN AIR FORCE: FEDERICO PARRA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES; MADURO-PUTIN: VALERY SHARIFULIN—TASS/GETTY IMAGES

It's not clear whether the strategy was ever implemented. Sudan's Foreign Ministry did not respond to several interview requests. But the ambitions set out in the document suggest that Russia has begun to offer its allies in Africa the sort of soft-power assistance with state building typically provided by NGOs and development agencies. "They're learning from us," says Paul Stronski, a Russia expert and former contractor for USAID, the development arm of the U.S. government, who reviewed the document at TIME's request. The key difference, he says, is that the reforms on offer from Russia seem mostly cosmetic. "They tick the boxes Sudan would need to improve its credit rating, but they don't really address the corruption in the system."

RUSSIAN HARD POWER, including armed mercenaries, is more worrying to Sudan's opposition movement. Since December, when El Roubi first

VENEZUELA
Left: the Russian air force took part in joint exercises with Venezuelan troops near Caracas in December. Right: Maduro with Putin on Dec. 5. He visited Russia to seek financial aid

spotted that Ural truck, her fellow demonstrators have posted photos and videos of similar scenes online. "What we're seeing in Khartoum are Russian mercenaries, and that's the last thing the country needs right now," says Eric Reeves, a researcher at Harvard University who has studied Sudan for 20 years.

Russia has for years used private mercenary outfits for its strategic missions abroad. Their first big test under Putin came on the battlefields of eastern Ukraine, where these loose formations of volunteers, ex-convicts and veterans helped the Russian military seize control of Crimea in 2014. In the eastern cities of Donetsk and Luhansk, they helped establish Russian protectorates known as People's Republics.

The groups exist in a legal gray zone. Private military companies are technically illegal in Russia, and serving in one can lead to a sentence of up to seven years in prison. But for the Kremlin, the law has provided a convenient way to control these companies through selective enforcement. "There's a criminal case waiting for every single fighter that steps out of line," says Evgeny Shabaev, a former paramilitary who has campaigned for the law to be overturned.

The war in Syria offered these groups a more complex battlefield on which to demonstrate their usefulness—and no company has succeeded like the Wagner Group, a Russian mercenary outfit whose fighters have told investigative journalists in the U.S., Russia and other countries that Prigozhin is the Group's founder and financial backer. (He has denied having anything to do with private military companies.) Along with its commander, Dmitry Utkin, the company has been under U.S. sanctions since 2017 for its role in the conflict in Ukraine. But it was in Syria that Utkin earned the Kremlin's gratitude. At an official awards ceremony in 2016, he even posed alongside Putin for a photo. When asked by journalists about the Wagner Group and the ban on private militaries, Putin was magnanimous. "If they comply with Russian laws," he said, in December 2018, "they have every right to work and promote their business interests anywhere in the world."

Those interests have sometimes landed the Wagner Group in trouble. In February 2018, Russian mercenaries and Syrian troops tried to seize a gas plant guarded by a small group of U.S. Marines who, when faced with a barrage of artillery fire, called in air support. U.S. fighter jets and attack helicopters reportedly killed dozens of Russian fighters and destroyed their column of military hardware. To the surprise of U.S. officers, the Russian military denied having anything to do with the combatants, who were overheard speaking Russian on their radios throughout the battle. "The Russian high command in Syria assured us it was not their people," James Mattis, who was then the U.S. Defense Secretary, told Senators last spring.

In reality, the mercenaries often work in lockstep with the Russian armed forces. This appears to be the case in Sudan, where one lease agreement obtained by TIME shows that in order to run flights in and out

of the country, a company run by a close associate of Prigozhin chartered Russian military planes. Many Western officials see the Wagner Group operating as an instrument of the Kremlin, behind a facade of deniability. As U.K. Defense Secretary Gavin Williamson put it in a February speech, the Wagner Group "allows the Kremlin to get away with murder while denying blood on their hands."

Last year three Russian journalists set out to report on the activities of Russian mercenary groups operating in the Central African Republic (CAR), which borders Sudan. All three of them—conflict reporter Orkhan Dzhemal, filmmaker Aleksandr Rastorguev and cameraman Kirill Radchenko—were shot dead on the side of a road on the night of July 30. The Russian government—which has been sending arms and contractors to CAR since early 2018—said the murders were the result of a robbery, possibly committed by rebels who control parts of the nation. But the journalists' friends and colleagues at the Dossier Center launched their own probe into the murders. Like all their work, that investigation was financed by Khodorkovsky, one of Putin's most vocal critics in exile. "We knew there was more to the story," the businessmen told TIME at his central London office.

The investigation concluded in January that Russian mercenaries were involved in a plot to kill the journalists in central Africa. The Kremlin was quick to deny these claims as a "conspiracy theory," and Russian state media pointed out the grudge that Khodorkovsky carries against Putin's regime, which imprisoned him for 10 years on charges of fraud and tax evasion before allowing him to move to Europe in 2013. But a lot of the documentary evidence uncovered by the Dossier Center was compelling: it included phone records that appeared to show Russian military contractors tracking the reporters before they were killed. (In the course of its investigations, the group also acquired a trove of documents related to Russian efforts in Sudan. After extensive vetting and verification, some were incorporated into this report.)

There's little mystery about the presence of Russia's private military companies in Sudan. Even though the regime has denied it, Russia has admitted they have been training local security forces since the end of last year. Asked about the deployment in January, Mikhail Bogdanov, the Russian diplomat in charge of relations with the Middle East and Africa, said it was a natural part of a burgeoning relationship. "We're in touch with the Sudanese leadership," he told Russian news agencies. "We know their needs, their requirements and requests to various Russian structures, both state and private ones."

The al-Bashir regime's primary need right now is to end the revolution. Sudan's police chief, Ahmed Bilal Osman, has denied that Russian mercenaries

NOTE: THIS MAP SHOWS INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS THAT WERE DIRECTLY TIED TO NATIONAL POLITICAL EVENTS SUCH AS ELECTIONS. IT DOES NOT ACCOUNT FOR THE PROPAGANDA THAT IS BROADCAST REGULARLY ON MOSCOW-FUNDED TV STATIONS AROUND THE WORLD. SIMILARLY, THIS MAP HIGHLIGHTS SIGNIFICANT MILITARY SUPPORT AND COOPERATION IN SELECT COUNTRIES AND DOES NOT ACCOUNT FOR ALL ARMS SALES.

SOURCES: CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE; INTERNATIONAL NEWS REPORTS

TIME GRAPHIC BY EMILY BARONE AND LON TWEETEN

have played any role in doing that. But their presence in the country may have emboldened al-Bashir to go even further than closing schools, imposing nationwide curfews and censoring the media, critics say. In February, al-Bashir declared a state of emergency, dissolving the central and regional governments and ordering the military to rule in their place. "Bashir is in full survival mode," says Reeves. "And the reason he thinks he can survive is the protection he is getting from the Russians."

RUSSIA DID NOT ALWAYS ADVOCATE for an end to the order defined by the West. "After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, we tried hard to fit in with the globalized world," Vladimir Yakunin, an old friend and colleague of Putin's from their service in the KGB, tells TIME. "But it was naive to assume that the family of civilized nations would really integrate us." The resulting sense of exclusion came to a head in 2007, when Putin gave a landmark speech in Munich to an audience of Western statesmen. He told them that the rising strength of Russia, China and other developing nations would soon end the American century. "That speech was not about Russia baring its fangs," says Yakunin. "It was a prophecy that, unfortunately, the Western leaders failed to heed at the time."

Today, while some in the West still offer sermons about democracy and human rights, the value that Russia champions on the world stage is sovereignty—which holds that each regime has the right to rule its territory without fear of foreign interference. Long exploited as a cover for the brutal suppression of dissent by autocratic regimes such as China, the principle got a boost when Trump took office. In his first speech to the U.N. General Assembly, the U.S. President used the word 10 times while conspicuously embracing autocratic leaders in Egypt, the Philippines and China. But it's Russia that's building a foreign policy around respect for rogue regimes without much judgment of their actions at home. "We don't tell anyone how to live," says Yakunin.

Russia offers its new friends a powerful weapon: its veto in the U.N. Security Council, which has been used to block at least a dozen Security Council resolutions on chemical-weapon use, war crimes and cease-fires since the Syrian civil war began in 2011. By coming to the aid of the Assad regime, Putin won the right to claim that Russia will stand by its allies even when they gas, bomb and torture their own citizens. "We don't toss any of our friends aside," says Klimov, the Russian senator. "In the West people often switch sides. They have different priorities."

Other nations have taken notice. In Africa, where the rule of law is too frequently tenuous, at least 18 governments have signed military-cooperation deals with Russia since its warplanes roared in to save Assad in 2015. According to the head of the Kremlin's arms-export monopoly, sales have also spiked since the Syrian intervention, pushing its backlog of orders to $50 billion last year.

At the same time, Russia is seeking to forge a reputation as a peace broker, especially in areas where the U.S. is seen to have fallen short. The Taliban, for instance, has been banned in Russia since 2003 as a terrorist organization. But its military successes against U.S.-led forces in Afghanistan cast the group in a new light. In a widely publicized summit in November, Taliban leaders were welcomed in Moscow for what the Kremlin billed as a round of peace talks. "The West has lost," Russia's special representative in Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov, told reporters after the talks. "The U.S. has had enough time, 17 years," he added, referring to the longest war in American history. "We don't need that kind of leadership."

With neither U.S. nor Afghan delegates in attendance, the talks were not going to produce anything but attention. But Moscow still seemed eager to elbow its way into the debate and demonstrate that it could bring the Taliban to the table. "There are bigger strategic games at play for Russia," says the former Afghan diplomat Omar Samad. "They see Afghanistan as a potential bargaining chip."

A lot of Putin's new entanglements in the developing world could be explained that way. Russia and many Putin allies are under sanctions imposed by the West, and the more hot spots where Russia has a hand, the more opportunities Putin might see for

FLORENT VERGNES—AFP/GETTY IMAGES (2)

leveraging relief. By this calculation, Putin's placing bets around the globe the way a gambler lays chips on a felt table.

Will they pay off? You can't win if you don't play. Some of Russia's initiatives could indeed ease tensions in far-flung conflict zones. At a peace conference held in Sudan last year, for instance, Russia managed to bring warring factions in the Central African Republic together. "One has to recognize that they have helped us," says Ambassador Smail Chergui, who chaired the talks on behalf the African Union, an intergovernmental body that promotes peace across the continent.

In Venezuela, if Russia resolved to end the standoff between Maduro and the opposition, the Kremlin would have no trouble bringing the dictator to the negotiating table: His regime subsists almost entirely on help from Moscow. Stakes in his country's enormous oil reserves have been snapped up by Russian energy firms at fire-sale prices.

But U.S. officials see scant evidence of altruism in Moscow's behavior, and little chance of its playing mediator. "Russian strategy is to support this regime," Elliott Abrams, the U.S. official in charge of resolving the conflict in Venezuela, told reporters in response to a question from TIME in March. "They are completely unconcerned by the degree of repression that the regime is using … They are trying to protect the money that they're owed by Venezuela."

And apart from the money, Putin also has a reputation to protect. In Syria, Sudan and other parts of the Arab world, as well as in Africa and much of Latin America, he is seen as a bulwark for autocrats, the man who will defend his allies' sovereignty no matter how much pressure they face from the West. This, above all, explains why Russia has created for itself a ragtag empire of pariah autocracies and half-failed states. There's a reason the world's dictators are lining up to sign cooperation deals with Russia.

It's working for Moscow. Eight months after meeting al-Bashir in Sochi, the Russian President was busy hosting the World Cup soccer tournament in cities across the country. But he did not miss a chance to sit down with Sudan's fugitive President, this time in the Kremlin. Putin noted that in the intervening months, trade between their countries had doubled and military ties had gotten stronger. Al-Bashir, looking a lot more confident than he had in Sochi, thanked Putin for acting as a "counterweight" to the West in the U.N. Security Council. In particular, he was glad that Russia had demanded the withdrawal of international peacekeepers from Darfur.

The meeting was brief. Both leaders had plans to watch the final of the World Cup the next day. But before parting ways with the man accused of carrying out the worst genocide of the 21st century, Putin smiled and had something to say. "We are glad to see you, Mr. President. Welcome!" —*With reporting by* PHILIP ELLIOTT/WASHINGTON *and* ALEC LUHN/MOSCOW ◻

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Left: Russian consultants have trained Central African armed forces, seen here in August 2018. Right: Russian diplomat Victor Tokmakov, left center, and Valeriy Zakharov, special security adviser to the nation's President, meet with government ministers after the deaths of Russian journalists in July

World

WE MUST SAVE NATO

A former Supreme Allied Commander of the alliance on why it's essential for world peace

BY ADMIRAL JAMES STAVRIDIS (RET.)

The heads of NATO's 29 member nations gather for a meeting at alliance headquarters in Brussels last July

PHOTOGRAPH BY CARL DE KEYZER

VERY FEW AMERICANS COULD FIND TINY MONTENEGRO ON A MAP. FEWER STILL COULD OFFER A COGENT DESCRIPTION OF THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SLOVENIA AND SLOVAKIA.

Most can't name the three Baltic countries. Yet thanks to Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's charter, which was signed 70 years ago in Washington, every American is bound by law to defend with blood and treasure each of those nations, and 22 others to boot.

To many who lived through the Cold War, the alliance may seem like an obvious good deal. By binding Europe's democracies together, NATO decreased the chances of the brutal conflicts that dominated the continent through the end of World War II. NATO provided a strong counterweight to Russia, and communism more broadly, helping defeat that ideology virtually without firing a shot. And when the U.S. went to war in Afghanistan after 9/11, the NATO allies went with us in their first and only exercise of Article 5.

Most of all, for decades NATO—the alliance for which I was Supreme Allied Commander from 2009 to 2013—was America's forward operating base for democracy, embodying shared values that were worth defending and even dying for.

But the Cold War is long over, and new challenges require clear thinking, not nostalgia. Originally conceived, as its first leader, Lord "Pug" Ismay, quipped, "to keep the Russians out, the Americans in and the Germans down," what exactly does NATO exist to do now? Its expansion to the tiny countries named above raises legitimate questions of common purpose and shared values. Russia is back and playing a much subtler role in undermining and threatening the organization. China's emergence as America's most powerful global competitor makes NATO seem anachronistic. Is the alliance, as President Donald Trump called it, "obsolete"?

The short answer is no. Many of the American interests it served in the Cold War are still advanced by NATO today, and walking away from the alliance will likely cost us more than staying and strengthening it. That shared fate is being celebrated in early April as NATO marks its 70th anniversary in Washington with events including an address by its Secretary-General to a joint session of Congress. But to save the alliance and advance the democratic values it was founded to defend, its leaders must take aggressive, creative action.

NATO 1.0
Leaders of the alliance meet at a summit in Paris in 1957 at the height of the Cold War

THE FACT IS, NATO is in trouble.

The original alliance was optimized for the lengthy, bipolar Cold War and had a relatively simple mission: stop the Soviets. It was a very costly approach that required massive expenditures on troops in Europe—around 400,000 at one point, compared with 62,000 today. But with only a dozen original members and a few added along the way, NATO was relatively tight in both size and mission.

After the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, NATO 2.0 began with a breath of optimism, sometimes described as a "new world order," with the U.S. firmly in the driver's seat and the alliance reaching out in friendship to the former Warsaw Pact countries—including to the Russian Federation. This was a sort of springtime in European security when the idea of a Europe "whole and free" and at peace,

PREVIOUS PAGES: MAGNUM PHOTOS; THESE PAGES: REG BIRKETT—KEYSTONE/GETTY IMAGES

as then President George H.W. Bush envisioned it, felt distinctly possible. But a combination of Russia's increasing resentment as its former allies joined NATO and the global drama of the 9/11 attacks created a new reality.

At the same time, NATO 2.0 began conducting counterterrorism and antipiracy campaigns in Iraq, Libya, the Horn of Africa and Syria, either through formal alliance missions or close cooperation among alliance members. These "out of area" operations became increasingly controversial and damaged not only the popularity of the alliance with other countries but also political cohesion within it. I felt this constantly in Brussels as Supreme Allied Commander, briefing the leadership of the then 28 nations: the air and sea campaign in Libya truly split the alliance; the Afghan campaign, with its rising casualty count, appeared to be a quagmire; and, later, debates over whether to have a formal NATO mission in Syria, on the border of NATO member Turkey, led to difficult sparring matches in the North Atlantic Council, the governing body of the alliance. It felt like the organization was fragmenting badly at the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century.

It was the avowed NATO hater Vladimir Putin, ironically, who revitalized the alliance and launched NATO 3.0. Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014 gave new purpose to NATO. I vividly remember attending an alliance meeting shortly after I took command in 2009 during which Chiefs of Defense of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania laid out a passionate, intelligence-based briefing on the possibility of Russian intervention in the Baltic countries. I assessed it to be a very low probability at that moment, but in the years afterward, I became increasingly concerned. We updated our NATO defensive war plans, conducted significant training exercises and requested additional forces across the organization to maintain a higher level of readiness. Putin's subsequent actions, including the shooting down of a Malaysia Airlines jet over Ukraine and increased aggression in the air and on the high seas around NATO's periphery, drew the alliance together.

But even as NATO reawakened, the challenge from outside was changing. Putin has practiced "hybrid warfare" against his neighbors, the would-be NATO members Georgia and Ukraine. A lethal mixture of propaganda, social-network manipulation, cyberoperations, special forces and unconventional terrorist-like attacks poses a different kind of threat than the tanks and missiles of the Cold War. Could Russia make a similar set of moves on a NATO ally?

Unlikely, but possible. And that threat only gets more difficult to counter with the advent of advanced military technology. As the tools of offensive cyberwarfare continue to grow—making definitive attribution of an attack difficult to achieve—Russia might be tempted to subvert smaller NATO allies in the Baltics or the Balkans. Doing so, Moscow might calculate, could create fissures in the alliance as the larger nations debate their willingness to fight for a tiny ally. Over time such a strategy could cleverly apply pressure to the real Achilles' heel of NATO, its already shaky political will. It would be a smart tactical move by Putin, who seems increasingly prepared to bet that the answer to the foundational question—Would you die for NATO?—is, for many, no.

President Trump is compounding that danger. He excoriated the alliance during the 2016 campaign and hectors the allies at every turn to increase their level of defense spending. That tactic admittedly has had some effect, as several allies have finally stepped up their spending to pledged levels. But it comes at a cost, creating resentment and division in response to the President's hostile and threatening tone. Worst of all, Trump himself has called into question America's Article 5 commitment on multiple occasions, most recently with regard to Montenegro.

That creeping lack of common purpose poses perhaps the greatest risk to NATO. Signs of authoritarianism are already emerging in some of the allied nations, like Poland, Hungary and Turkey. The looming danger of Brexit seems to cut against the core values of the alliance. And the abdication of NATO leadership by the U.S., which for so long stood as a standard of democratic governance for the world, threatens the foundation on which the alliance rests.

FOR ALL THOSE HARBINGERS of trouble, though, by many traditional measures, NATO remains extremely healthy.

It is powerful. The 29 nations of NATO produce more than 50% of the world's gross domestic product, have well over 3 million troops on duty, operate massive combined naval fleets and air forces and together spend over $1 trillion on defense. Indeed, even with all the frustration over European defense spending not hitting the 2% of GDP goal, the collective European defense budget is the second largest in the world after the U.S.'s and is ahead of China's and Russia's—combined.

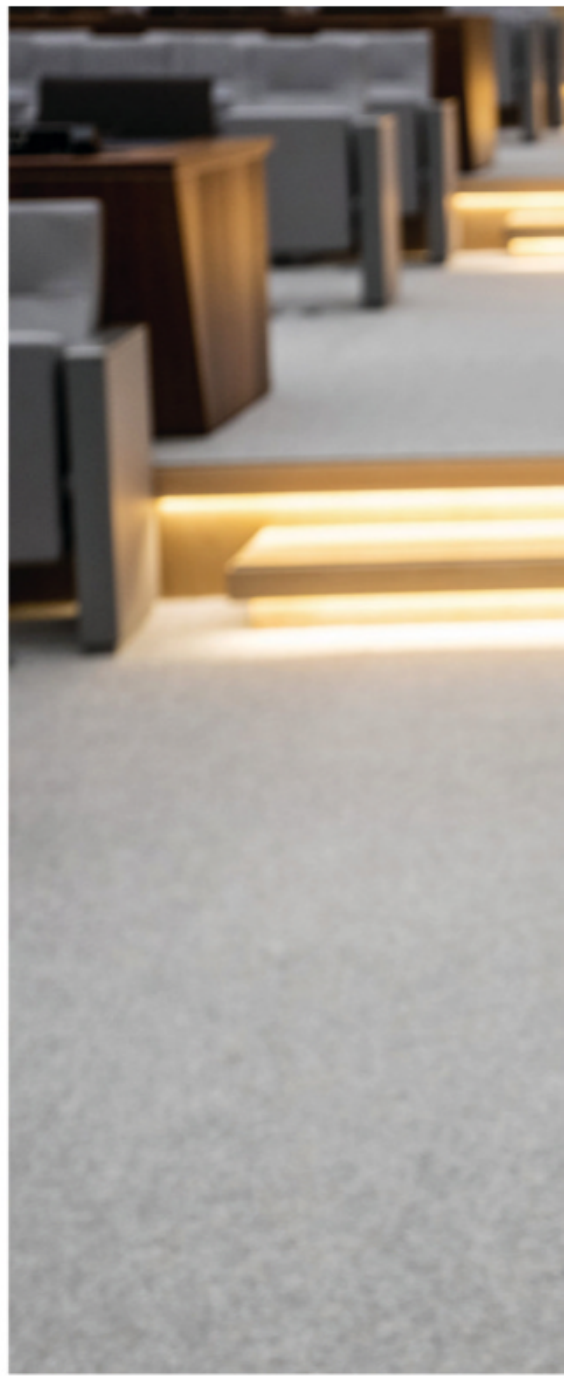
It is smart. U.S. and European defense innovation and production provides a formidable military research and development capacity. Particularly in cybersecurity, unmanned vehicles, space operations, special-forces technologies, maritime and antisubmarine capability, and air and missile defense, NATO is a technology and education superpower.

It is capable. The alliance boasts a large command structure of highly qualified teams of military officers from all of the 29 nations. Throughout Europe and the East Coast of the U.S., those teams prepare war plans, conduct training exercises, monitor readiness of allied units, gather intelligence about potential adversaries and run complex operations centers that cover the entire geographic range of NATO. These standing staffs, which we rationalized by reducing them 35% while I was NATO commander, can conduct prompt and sustained combat operations in a coalition structure on short notice.

Just as important as NATO's health is the fact that we still need it. Geography matters, and the European peninsula is particularly well located on the western edge of the Eurasian landmass. When I was the Supreme Allied Commander at NATO, people would say to me, "Why do we need all those useless Cold War bases?" My reply was simple: They are not Cold War bases but rather the forward operating stations of the U.S. in the 21st century. When necessary, they allow us to operate in the Middle East and Africa. But they primarily serve as a bulwark: NATO is not global in its scope, scale or ambition and will remain tightly focused on the North Atlantic.

Moreover, despite all the frustrations of coalition warfare, most observers would agree with Winston Churchill that "there is only one thing worse than fighting with allies, and that is fighting without them." The greatest single advantage the U.S. has on the global stage is our network of allies, partners and friends. That network is under deliberate pressure: from China, with its "One Belt, One Road" competitive strategy, and from Russia, with its relentless attacks on coalition unity. A strong NATO means not only having allies in a fight, should it come to that, but also a powerful deterrent to the aggression of ambitious adversaries.

Perhaps NATO's greatest accomplishment is not even its unblemished record of deterring attack against its members but rather the fact that no alliance nation has ever attacked another. NATO's most fundamental deliverable has been peace among Europe's major powers for 70 years after two millennia of unhesitating slaughter on the continent. The disasters



VACANCY AT THE TOP *NATO headquarters, July 2018*

CARL DE KEYZER—MAGNUM PHOTOS

of the 20th century alone pulled the U.S. into two world wars that killed more than half a million Americans.

History provides few achievements that compare to those seven decades of peace. They were built not on the ambitions of cold-eyed leaders but something more noble. NATO is a pool of partners who, despite some egregious outliers, by and large share fundamental values—democracy, liberty, freedom of speech, freedom of expression, gender equality, and racial equality. Admittedly we execute those values imperfectly, and they are stronger in some NATO countries than in others. But they are the right values, and there is no other place on earth where the U.S. could find such a significant number of like-minded nations that are willing to bind themselves with us in a defensive military treaty.

SO WHAT CAN NATO DO to ensure the alliance continues to provide value for all the members in general, and for the U.S. in particular? What would a NATO 4.0 look like?

The alliance should up its game in cybersecurity, both defensively and in the collective development of new offensive cybertools. Geographically, the alliance needs more focus on the Arctic; as global warming opens shipping lanes and access to hydrocarbons, geopolitical competition will increase. We should taper off the Afghan mission, perhaps maintaining a small training cadre in country and continuing to help the Afghan security forces push the Taliban to negotiate peace.

There is work to do in consolidating the Balkans, where tensions among Serbs, Croats and Balkan Muslims threaten to erupt into war again. NATO can continue to have a small mission there to help continue the arc of reconciliation. The alliance will need to be forthright in dealing with Russia, confronting Putin where we must—in its invasion and continued occupation of Ukraine—but at the same time attempting to reduce operational tensions and find zones of cooperation.

Geographically, the biggest challenge ahead will be the Middle East. The NATO nations do not agree on an approach with Iran, which is an aggressive actor in the region with significant ambitions that will impact NATO. Developing better partnerships with the Arab world, which began in earnest with the Libyan campaign and continued into Syrian operations against the so-called Islamic State alongside various NATO allies in the U.S.-led coalition, makes sense. Working far more closely with Israel would pay dividends for the alliance.

And what of other tiny, would-be members, the next Montenegros? NATO should accept North Macedonia to stabilize the south Balkans, then halt expansion. It should build global partnerships with democracies like Japan, Australia, New Zealand, India and other Indo-Pacific nations.

Should we be prepared to fight and die in a NATO campaign? Yes. On balance, the alliance still provides strategic benefit to the U.S. We should support this venerable organization, encourage our allies to increase their defense spending and push them to operate with us on key challenges. We should demand that they help us build a NATO 4.0 that is even more fit for the decades ahead.

We should also remember how dangerous the world can be. As NATO's Supreme Allied Commander for four years, I signed more than 2,000 personal condolence letters; about a third of them were to the grieving family members of European soldiers. I visited the thousands of non-U.S. troops in Afghanistan often, and they were uniformly brave, professional and motivated.

As a democracy, it is right that we should debate whether NATO is worth dying for. I can tell you that our NATO allies have shown time and again they are willing to fight and die for us. ◻

Stavridis was the 16th Supreme Allied Commander of NATO

A group portrait of the first African-American legislators in the 41st and 42nd Congress

History

America's Second Sin

How an overlooked era still shapes our world

By Henry Louis Gates Jr.

DURING AN INTERVIEW WITH CHRIS ROCK FOR MY PBS SERIES *African American Lives 2,* we traced the ancestry of several well-known African Americans. When I told Rock that his great-great-grandfather Julius Caesar Tingman had served in the U.S. Colored Troops during the Civil War—enrolling on March 7, 1865, a little more than a month after the Confederates evacuated from Charleston, S.C.—he was brought to tears. I explained that seven years later, while still a young man in his mid-20s, this same ancestor was elected to the South Carolina house of representatives as part of that state's Reconstruction government. Rock was flabbergasted, his pride in his ancestor rivaled only by gratitude that Julius' story had been revealed at last. "It's sad that all this stuff was kind of buried and that I went through a whole childhood and most of my adulthood not knowing," Rock said. "How in the world could I not know this?"

I realized then that even descendants of black heroes of Reconstruction had lost the memory of their ancestors' heroic achievements. I have been interested in Reconstruction and its tragic aftermath since I was an undergraduate at Yale University, and I have been teaching works by black authors from the second half of the 19th century for decades. But the urgent need for a broader public conversation about the period first struck me only in that conversation with Rock.

Reconstruction, the period in American history that followed the Civil War, was an era filled with great hope and expectations, but it proved far too short to ensure a successful transition from bondage to free labor for the almost 4 million black human beings who'd been born

into slavery in the U.S. During Reconstruction, the U.S. government maintained an active presence in the former Confederate states to protect the rights of the newly freed slaves and to help them, however incompletely, on the path to becoming full citizens. A little more than a decade later, the era came to an end when the contested presidential election of 1876 was resolved by trading the electoral votes of South Carolina, Louisiana and Florida for the removal of federal troops from the last Southern statehouses.

Today, many of us know precious little about what happened during those years. But, regardless of its brevity, Reconstruction remains one of the most pivotal eras in the history of race relations in American history—and probably the most misunderstood.

Reconstruction was fundamentally about who got to be an American citizen. It was in that period that the Constitution was amended to establish birthright citizenship through the 14th Amendment, which also guaranteed equality before the law regardless of race. The 15th Amendment, ratified in 1870, barred racial discrimination in voting, thus securing the ballot for black men nationwide. As Eric Foner, the leading historian of the era, puts it, "The issues central to Reconstruction—citizenship, voting rights, terrorist violence, the relationship between economic and political democracy—continue to roil our society and politics today, making an understanding of Reconstruction even more vital." A key lesson of Reconstruction and its violent, racist rollback is, Foner continues, "that achievements thought permanent can be overturned and rights can never be taken for granted."

Another lesson this era of our history teaches us is that, even when stripped of their rights by courts, legislatures and revised state constitutions, African Americans never surrendered to white supremacy. Resistance, too, is their legacy.

BY 1877, in a climate of economic crisis, the "cost" of protecting the freedoms of African Americans became a price the American government was no longer willing to pay. The long rollback began in earnest: the period of retrenchment, voter suppression, Jim Crow segregation and quasi re-enslavement that was called by white Southerners, ironically, "Redemption." As a worried Frederick Douglass, sensing the storm clouds gathering on the horizon, put it in a speech at the Republican National Convention on June 14, 1876: "You say you have emancipated us. You have; and I thank you for it. You say you have enfranchised us; and I thank you for it. But what is your emancipation?—What is your enfranchisement? What does it all amount to if the black man, after having been made free by the letter of your law, is unable to exercise that freedom, and, after having been freed from the slaveholder's lash, he is to be subject to the slaveholder's shotgun?"

Jim Crow was a system of racial segregation and a social-media campaign

What confounds me is how much longer the rollback of Reconstruction was than Reconstruction itself, how dogged was the determination of the "Redeemed South" to obliterate any trace of the gains made by freed people. In South Carolina, for example, the state university that had been integrated during Reconstruction (indeed, Harvard's first black college graduate, Richard T. Greener, was a professor there) was swiftly shut down and reopened three years later for whites only. That color line remained in place there until 1963.

In addition to their moves to strip African Americans of their voting rights, "Redeemer" governments across the South slashed government investments in infrastructure and social programs across the board, including those for the region's first state-funded public-school systems, a product of Reconstruction. In doing so, they re-empowered a private sphere dominated by the white planter class. A new wave of state constitutional conventions followed, starting with Mississippi in 1890. These effectively undermined the Reconstruction Amendments, especially the right of black men to vote, in each of the former Confederate states by 1908. To take just one example: whereas in Louisiana, 130,000 black men were registered to vote before the state instituted its new constitution in 1898, by 1904 that number had been reduced to 1,342.

And at what the historian Rayford W. Logan dubbed the "nadir" of American race relations—the time of political, economic, social and legal hardening around segregation—widespread violence, disenfranchisement and lynching coincided with a hardening of racist concepts of "race."

This painfully long period following Reconstruction saw the explosion of white-supremacist ideology across an array of media and through an extraordinary variety of forms, all designed to warp the mind toward white-supremacist beliefs. Minstrelsy and racist visual imagery were weapons in the battle over the status of African Americans in postslavery America, and some continue to be manufactured to this day.

THE PROCESS OF DEHUMANIZATION triggered a resistance movement. Among a rising generation of the black elite, this resistance was represented after 1895 through the concept of "The New Negro," a counter to the avalanche of racist images of black people that proliferated throughout Gilded Age American society in advertisements, posters and postcards, helped along by technological innovations that enabled the cheap mass production of multicolored prints. Not surprisingly, racist images of black people—characterized by exaggerated

PREVIOUS PAGES, THESE PAGES: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

physical features, the blackest of skin tones, the whitest of eyes and the reddest of lips—were a favorite subject of these multicolored prints during the rollback of Reconstruction and the birth of Jim Crow segregation in the 1890s.

We can think of the New Negro as Black America's first superhero, locked in combat against the white-supremacist fiction of African Americans as "Sambos," by nature lazy, mentally inferior, licentious and, beneath the surface, lurking sexual predators. The New Negro would undergo several transformations within the race between the mid-1890s and the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s, but, in its essence, it was a trope—summarized by one writer in 1928 as a continuously evolving "mythological figure"—that would be drawn upon and revised over three decades by black leaders in the country's first social-media war: the New Negro vs. Sambo.

The concept would prove to be quite volatile. Supposedly New Negroes could be supplanted by even "newer" Negroes. For example, Booker T. Washington, the conservative, accommodationist educator, would be hailed as the first New Negro in 1895, only to be dethroned exactly a decade later on the cover of the *Voice of the Negro* magazine by his nemesis, W.E.B. Du Bois, the Harvard-trained historian. Du Bois had globalized his version of the New Negro in a landmark photography exhibition at the 1900 Paris Exposition and then, three years later, in his monumental work, *The Souls of Black Folk,* mounted a devastating attack on Washington's philosophy of race relations as dangerously complicitous with Jim Crow segregation and, especially, black-male disenfranchisement. Du Bois, a founder of the militant Niagara Movement in 1905, would co-found the NAACP in 1909. And while Douglass had already seen the potential of photography to present an authentic face of black America, and thus to counteract the onslaught of negative stereotypes pervading American society, the children of Reconstruction were the ones who picked up the torch after his death in 1895.

This new generation experimented with a range of artistic mediums to carve out a space for a New Negro who would lead the race—and the country—into the rising century, one whose racial attitudes would be more modern and cosmopolitan than those of the previous century, marred by slavery and Civil War. When D.W. Griffith released his racist Lost Cause fantasy film *The Birth of a Nation* in 1915, New Negro activists responded not only with protest but also with support for African-American artists like the pioneering independent producer and director Oscar Micheaux, whose reels of silent films exposed the horrors of white supremacy while advancing a fuller, more humanistic take on black life.

Their pushback against Redemption took many forms. Denied the ballot box, African-American women and men organized political associations, churches, schools and social clubs, both to nurture their own culture and to speak out as forcefully as they could against the suffocating oppression unfolding around them. Though brutalized by the shockingly extensive practices of lynching and rape, reinforced by terrorism and vigilante violence, they exposed the crimes and hypocrisy of white supremacy in their own newspapers and magazines, and in marches and political rallies. But no weapon was drawn upon more frequently than images of the New Negro and what the historian Evelyn Higginbotham calls "the politics of respectability."

A Harper's Weekly *cover from March 14, 1874, lampoons members of the South Carolina legislature*

Assaulted by the degrading, mass-produced imagery of the Lost Cause, its romanticization of the Old South and stereotypes of Sambo and the Old Negro, they avidly counterpunched with their own images of modern women and men, which they widely disseminated in journalism, photography, literature and the arts. Drawing on the tradition of agitation epitomized by the black Reconstruction Congressmen, such as John Mercer Langston, and former abolitionists, such as the inimitable Douglass, the children of Reconstruction would lay the foundation for the civil rights revolution to come in the 20th century.

But what also seems clear to me today is that it was in that period that white-supremacist ideology, especially as it was transmuted into powerful new forms of media, poisoned the American imagination in ways that have long outlasted its origin. You might say that antiblack racism once helped fuel an economic system, and that black crude was pumped and freighted around the world. Now, more than a century and a half since the end of slavery in the U.S., it drifts like a toxic oil slick as the supertanker lists into the sea.

When Dylann Roof murdered the Rev. Clementa Pinckney and the eight other innocents in Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, S.C., on June 17, 2015, he didn't need to have read any of this history; it had, unfortunately, long become part of our country's cultural DNA and, it seems, imprinted on his own. It is important that we both celebrate the triumphs of African Americans following the Civil War and explain how the forces of white supremacy did their best to undermine those triumphs—then and in all the years since, through to the present.

Gates is the Alphonse Fletcher university professor and director of the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research at Harvard University. His PBS series on Reconstruction airs April 9 and April 16. This essay is adapted from his new book, Stony the Road: Reconstruction, White Supremacy, and the Rise of Jim Crow

O'Connell knows a leading role is rare for an actor with a disability: "I never thought I could be the star of the show," he says

FILLING IN THE PICTURE

Ryan O'Connell's new series, *Special,* marks a major step forward for disability representation in Hollywood. But there's still a long way to go

By Eliza Berman

RYAN O'CONNELL LIKENS HIS NEW SHOW, *SPECIAL,* to an Ariana Grande song—which is to say, it's pop. It's not Stravinsky or Coltrane; it's not, as he puts it, "some lo-fi mumblecore sh-t." The semi-autobiographical series he wrote and stars in, about an introverted millennial struggling to move out of his mom's house and become a writer, is conventional. Most of its episodes have an A plot and a B plot. There's a plucky protagonist and a lovable sidekick.

But ahead of its April 12 debut on Netflix, there are many for whom *Special* is so much more than your average sitcom. The series marks the biggest stage in recent memory for a creator with a disability—and an unprecedented platform that puts him in control of the storytelling. "I'm excited that people are saying, 'I've never seen this before,'" says O'Connell, who has cerebral palsy (CP), over the phone from Los Angeles. "But part of me is also like, Why? We should have seen this 40 million years ago."

In recent years, conversations about representation in Hollywood have increased in urgency, from #OscarsSoWhite to the whitewashing of Asian roles to the lack of women behind the camera. But disability has been almost as scarce in mainstream discussions as it has been on the screen. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1 in 4 Americans has a disability. Yet only about 2% of TV characters have a disability, and 95% of those that do are portrayed by nondisabled performers.

With *Special,* O'Connell, 32, wasn't trying to fill a void. He was just trying to tell his own story. And he has been for the past decade, beginning with bracingly candid blog posts about everything from internships to sex, which led to a book deal when he was 25. That 2015 memoir, *I'm Special: And Other Lies We Tell Ourselves,* serves as the basis for the series. "I'm addicted to being honest," he says. "It's a compulsion."

The book caught the eye of *The Big Bang Theory*'s Jim Parsons, who was launching a production company and optioned it for a TV project. "This is exactly what you're looking for as a viewer, a reader, a producer," says Parsons, who executive-produced the show. "Someone with this tragically specific point of view—comically so—but in a very everyman way."

In the book, O'Connell, who had come out as gay as a teenager, came out of a second closet: until then, despite his penchant for honesty, he had kept his CP a secret, telling even close friends his limp was a result of getting hit by a car. (He actually was hit by a car, but the limp predates that.) He naively assumed coming clean was an end, rather than the beginning of a new reckoning. "I wasn't recognizing the psychic harm of being closeted," he says of that time. "Internalized ableism is a gnarly drug."

PHOTOGRAPH BY RYAN PFLUGER

In the four years it took to get the show made, O'Connell continued to process how honesty was reshaping his life. *Special* may be shot with a breezy, Los Angeles expansiveness, but spiritually it's enclosed by the walls of that second closet. The show's Ryan, an emotionally stunted version of the present-day one, keeps bumping up against them. In one episode, he's set up on a blind date and swiftly rejects his companion, who is deaf, unable to see past his disability. "He hates seeing himself reflected back to him," says O'Connell. It's a deft rejoinder to anyone tempted to flatten disability into a one-dimensional, "Kumbaya"-singing monolith. But in other moments, he begins to see life beyond those walls. When he loses his virginity to a sex worker, the encounter is tender but vanilla, free of trauma and drama. O'Connell says several early viewers said they braced for Ryan to get hurt. "Are you thinking he's going to get humiliated because he's disabled?" he asks. "Are we conditioned to think there's no way a gay guy can have a positive sexual experience?" Expectations like these reflect more about viewers, O'Connell says, than the show.

But there's another set of expectations people bring, and they have less to do with what's depicted than who's doing the depicting. Last year, films such as *Black Panther* and *Crazy Rich Asians* were heralded as milestones in representation—not just for who was on camera but who was behind it. Among audiences, there's an unprecedented desire to see control shift into the hands of storytellers who haven't historically had much power. To O'Connell, ensuring that a story rings true is pretty simple: "It needs to come from a person that's experienced it."

THE STORIES OF PEOPLE with disabilities have long been told by people without them, on both sides of the camera. There's an entire subset of Oscar winners who got to the podium via the struggles of characters with disabilities: Dustin Hoffman in *Rain Man,* Daniel Day-Lewis in *My Left Foot,* Jamie Foxx in *Ray.* "It seems to be an easy way to get an award in Hollywood," says Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi, president of the nonprofit RespectAbility, which aims to advance opportunities for people with disabilities. O'Connell didn't intend to star in *Special*—"We honestly had no money," he says of the decision. But even if he hadn't, he can't fathom an actor who doesn't have CP in the role. "The thought of having an able-bodied person play-limp makes my insides fall out," he says.

The problem isn't just who gets the roles. It's whether they exist at all—an issue exacerbated by the lack of people with disabilities in writers' rooms and directors' chairs. It's not just that it's rare for people with a disability to have a leading role; they're often erased from the crowd too. Disabled characters that do make it to the screen have been plagued by harmful stereotypes from the start. During the silent-film era, they fell on either end of a spectrum: child-like and desexualized or vengeful and grotesque. A

ROAD TO INCLUSION

The history of disability representation onscreen is one of incremental progress—punctuated by harmful stereotypes:

1898
Thomas Edison's short movie ***The Fake Beggar*** is the first known portrayal of a person with a disability on film. The titular character, who is blind and missing his legs, is portrayed as a homeless, untrustworthy scammer.

1920s
Silent-film star Lon Chaney builds a career on his often grotesque portrayals of characters with disabilities in movies like ***The Hunchback of Notre Dame*** *(right)* and ***The Phantom of the Opera.***

1946
Director William Wyler casts Harold Russell, a World War II veteran who lost both his hands, in ***The Best Years of Our Lives,*** one of many postwar movies to treat veterans with disabilities with reverence.

1951
Susan Peters, an Oscar-nominated actor, paralyzed from the waist down in a hunting accident, becomes the first performer with a disability to appear on TV. The daytime soap opera ***Miss Susan*** is created for her to star in.

PREVIOUS PAGES: AUGUST; THESE PAGES: NETFLIX; EVERETT (2); JULIA: SESAME STREET; MATLIN: GETTY IMAGES

century later many see the X-Men "mutants," who rise above their impairments with superhuman powers, as a suggestion that a disability is something that should be heroically overcome. The late comedian and activist Stella Young popularized the term *inspiration porn* to describe the treatment of people with disabilities as extraordinary just for going about their daily lives.

These issues don't get the attention of a viral, campaign-like #OscarsSoWhite hashtag, in part because stigma keeps so many in the closet. "The majority of disabilities are invisible: mental-health conditions, chronic pain, learning disabilities," says Mizrahi. She estimates the movement is now where the LGBTQ movement was 20 years ago. The lack of intersectional representation—characters with disabilities are largely white, male, straight and cisgender—makes *Special* that much more of a unicorn.

There are a few other bright spots. ABC's *Speechless* stars an actor with CP playing a character with CP. The show's creator, Scott Silveri, was inspired by his own experiences growing up with a brother who had CP. The same network's popular *The Good Doctor* has been criticized by some for starring a neurotypical actor as a surgeon with autism. But others have lauded it for weaving people with autism into the fabric of the show, from the writers' room to the team that does its computer graphics.

"The goodwill is there," says Mizrahi. (So is the money: Nielsen Media Research estimates the disabled population's buying power is $1 billion.) "It's just that it had never occurred to them to include us." Hollywood types, O'Connell says, are always saying that buyers want a certain kind of show right now, but he balks at this. "They don't know what they want," he says. "They need you to tell them."

WITHIN A FEW DAYS of launching, the trailer for *Special* was approaching 3 million views on Twitter, racking up hundreds of thousands of likes and retweets. The comments constituted a chorus of *finally*s. A few commenters said they were, like O'Connell, both gay and living with CP. But many identified with one or the other or neither. "It was so important to me that this show feel universal," O'Connell says.

Still, being called a trailblazer gives him some anxiety. "I don't know everything there is to know about disability. I just know what I went through," he says. He does know that if *Special* had been around when he was younger, "I would have left 'I hate myself' a long time ago." And he might have realized sooner that the career path he's on now was available to him. "I wasn't thinking when I was 12 years old, 'I want to write and create and star in a TV show,'" he says. "I was just trying to get out alive, honey."

Special doesn't so much plug a hole as it puts one small patch on one small corner of an abyss. But it's a start. "I'm glad it's out," O'Connell says of the show. "But let's do better. And let's get there faster." ◻

O'Connell based the enmeshed mother-son relationship in Special *on his own, imagining what it might be like if Ryan's mom (Jessica Hecht) took the time to focus on her own needs*

1978
Jon Voight's portrayal of a veteran with a disability in ***Coming Home*** *(left)* wins praise (and an Oscar) for its realistic depiction of everyday challenges, like navigating the aisles of a supermarket, faced by people who use a wheelchair.

1986
Children of a Lesser God is the first movie since the silent era to feature a deaf actor in a leading role. The next year, star Marlee Matlin *(right)* becomes the first deaf performer to win an Oscar, delivering her speech in sign language.

1989
ABC's ***Life Goes On*** is the first major show to feature a central character with Down syndrome. The middle child of a suburban Chicago family, Corky (Chris Burke) is mainstreamed into a traditional high school, gets a job as an usher at a movie theater and has a girlfriend.

2017
Sesame Street debuts a new Muppet, Julia *(left)*, a 4-year-old girl with autism. To develop the character, the show's puppeteers, writers and designers drew on personal experiences with children, siblings or friends with autism.

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INSIDE

ROBERT PATTINSON GETS LOST IN SPACE IN HIGH LIFE

A BREEZY NEW NOVEL PUTS JACKIE O IN THE EDITOR'S SEAT

FOSSE/VERDON *WILL FILL THE* MAD MEN*–SIZE HOLE IN YOUR HEART*

MOVIES

Can *Shazam!* redeem comic-book culture?

By Stephanie Zacharek

Levi and friends in Shazam!, *a comic-book movie that takes itself just seriously enough*

BEFORE COMIC-BOOK CULTURE WAS A RELIGION, it was a pleasure, often a forbidden one. Kids used to have to hide their comic-book collections from their parents. Loving comics and their artistry was an act of rebellion.

Today it's a kind of tyranny. When we were kids, these stories told in words and pictures may have helped us feel more empowered in the face of bullies; now they're used to bully others. Don't ever dare suggest that comic books are supposed to be fun. You must treat comics and their resident superheroes with utmost seriousness, and you must also have the proper enthusiasm for the multimillion-dollar film products they spawn. Critics who disliked Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight* got death and rape threats. (I know, because I was one of them.) On Twitter, trolling is a way of life for lowlifes who perceive that their devotion to the Avengers, or any other superhero franchise, is being undermined in any way. Comic-book culture today is so constrained by rules and expectations that it's the opposite of cool. It's square.

But what if someone made a superhero movie that was breezy and fun, free of dourness and portent? What if the jokes in this movie were loopy and loose, as if the people who'd made it felt they had nothing to lose, as opposed to conforming to rigid fan-base expectations? And what if the main character was just a goofball and not a specially molded receptacle ready to hold all our dreams, fears and insecurities? *Shazam!*—directed by David F. Sandberg and starring Zachary Levi as a 14-year-old kid in a grown man's superpower-enhanced body—is a model for a new kind of superhero movie, one that demands neither genuflection nor forced grinning at 1,001 little cultish inside jokes. *Shazam!* just breathes, and it's bliss.

IT'S TIME WE STARTED thinking about superhero movies like the grownups we are. That may mean returning them to the realm of kids, or at least restoring some air and lightness to them—which is what *Shazam!* does. Its hero is runaway foster kid Billy Batson (Asher Angel), a bright, unruly teenager who's always trying to outwit the cops, not to mention child protective services. Billy doesn't mean any harm—he's only looking for his real mom—but the law catches up with him, and he lands in a foster home with a bunch of other kids who, like him, aren't quite sure where they belong in the world. He makes friends, at first reluctantly, with one of his new housemates, Freddy Freeman (Jack Dylan Grazer). Freddy needs a brace in order to walk, though before long the brace becomes invisible and the person—smart, fast-talking, awkwardly charming—is all you see.

The amiable gimmick of *Shazam!* is that Billy, after almost accidentally passing a test of his spiritual worthiness, is granted the power to become Shazam, a full-grown hero with a bodaciously muscular chest and numerous superpowers that include flying, electricity manipulation and resistance to bullets. Shazam, as played by Levi, is an adolescent catapulted into the world of adulthood à la Tom Hanks in *Big*.

Billy is psyched to find himself in the body of a grownup, with all the privilege that confers: he strides into a convenience store, puffs out his already considerably puffy chest and informs the clerk, "I'd like to purchase some of your finest beer, please." But Billy can't be Shazam all the time, and when he's not, he has to follow all the rules of being a teenager, still powerless in the real world. And because he doesn't yet know how formidable his powers are, he risks being vanquished by the movie's main villain, Dr. Thaddeus Sivana (the preternaturally elegant Mark Strong), who has harnessed the power of the Seven Deadly Sins and is about to unleash it on the universe.

OPENING PAGE, THESE PAGES: STEVE WILKIE—WARNER BROS.

***SHAZAM!* IS A PRODUCT** of Warner Bros.' DC Universe, but it's a pop confection, markedly distinct from the self-conscious doominess of so many movies adapted from comic books. Which brings us to a question: there's room for plenty of filmmaking styles in the comic-book-adaptation firmament. Why, then, do we get so many in the same mold? Marvel's typically somber, ultra-respectful approach—leavened by the occasional overscripted sardonic quip from Iron Man or an irreverent blurt from Rocket Raccoon—has proved to bring in the big bucks, which means it's unlikely to change. In a few weeks Marvel fans will once again flock to the cathedral for *Avengers: Endgame,* the capper to the two-part story that began, more or less, with last year's *Avengers: Infinity War.* In *Infinity War,* a good half of Marvel's most beloved superheroes crumbled to dust. You can bet that in *Endgame,* most or all will permanently come back, although one or two will probably be sacrificed forever.

Marvel's universe isn't that different from Shakespeare's: you know someone has to kick the bucket; for fans, watching the how and why unfold is part of the cathartic pleasure. Yet the epic battles in these films have reached a generic level of largesse; filmmakers aren't sure how to make them innovative or particularly interesting, so they just keep making them bigger. Why does every beat have to be so momentous? When everything's a climax, there's nothing to climb toward.

Once in a while, a superhero movie breaks the pattern: Ryan Coogler's *Black Panther,* for example, lives nobly on an island of its own. Ditto for this past year's *Aquaman,* directed by James Wan and starring Jason Momoa, a vision of underwater pulp extravagance. And the *Ant-Man* pictures, featuring Paul Rudd, are terrifically goofy and all the more appealing for it.

But those films are exceptions. The stakes for comic-book movies are so high these days that any sort of radical experimentation is risky. The *Black Panther* comics, for example, are deeply meaningful for young people of color who grew up with them—luckily, Coogler's film lived up to fans' expectations, though he also succeeded in making a movie that even comic-book outsiders could enjoy. Comic-book fans started speculating about *Wonder Woman* and *Captain Marvel*—the first two movies to feature women as superheroes—months, even years, before they were released. Internet trolls, unhappy about the idea of too many feisty wimminfolk infiltrating the comic-book man cave, or something, entered the fray as well. Normal, sane people couldn't help feeling protective of those films in advance—to the point that when they landed, it was hard to talk about whether or not they worked as movies. Instead, we had to keep asking, What do they do for women?—a question that limits how we think about both movies *and* women.

> ***'It's not glum, like, "Oh, I have to save the world again."'***
>
> **ZACHARY LEVI,** describing the worldview of his *Shazam!* character on *Entertainment Tonight*

Superhero pictures are now required to be therapy sessions in the form of a movie ticket. Voice a criticism of either *Wonder Woman* or *Captain Marvel* and you're likely to be shouted down with a chorus of "But look at all the little girls in their superhero outfits!" As if the greatest measure of a movie's worth were its ability to get a kid into a costume. Kids can and should enjoy these movies. But maybe their value is greater to adults than it is to children.

WHICH BRINGS US BACK to Billy and Freddy, using Billy's newfound superpowers—to buy beer. Shazam isn't much of a role model. He's actually kind of a jerk. He lets Freddy down at a crucial moment, leaving him exposed to a duo of school bullies. Then he shows off by saving a bus full of people dangling from a bridge—though it wouldn't be dangling at all if not for him.

Sandberg (director of the horror pictures *Lights Out* and *Annabelle: Creation*) and Levi (perhaps best known from TV's *Chuck,* though he also played Fandral in two of the *Thor* movies) treat Billy's insecurities and foibles—whether he's in his teenage body or the grownup one—as passing anxieties, not major, life-defining stumbling blocks. Levi's Shazam is the perfect amalgam of muscle-bound bravado and youthful hubris—but both are tempered by the fact that Billy, deep down, is just a really good kid. In its fantasy sequences, *Shazam!* has the vibe of an Indiana Jones adventure—there's a ramshackle inventiveness to it. And you can come into it cold, having no idea who Shazam is. (He was created in 1939 as Captain Marvel, originally appearing in comics published by Fawcett and later licensed to DC.)

But best of all, *Shazam!* feels young, a world apart from that stone-cold cosmos in which self-serious villains descend upon humanity with their dumb jeweled gloves. The dialogue even includes some slangy swear words, suitable for shocking uptight parents. *Shazam!* is modern and yet somehow lived-in, like a pair of well-worn sneakers. It speaks of a time when you had to hide comic books under your bed. And your dad wasn't wearing a Batman T-shirt. ☐

MOVIES

Peterloo is history with heart and soul

YOU MIGHT NEED TO BE SOMETHING OF AN ENGLISH-HISTORY nut to truly love *Peterloo,* Mike Leigh's somber and ambitious film about the Peterloo Massacre of 1819, in which 18 people were killed and many more were injured when cavalry soldiers charged a group of roughly 60,000 citizens who had gathered peacefully in Manchester's St. Peter's Field to campaign for parliamentary reform. But even if you've never heard of the Peterloo Massacre, this picture—beautifully staged and shot, with a you-are-there urgency—will reward your patience.

Peterloo focuses partially on one family, that of a young Manchester man named Joseph (David Moorst), an army bugler who has recently returned from the Napoleonic Wars with a case of PTSD. Joseph's mother, Nellie (Maxine Peake), is a careworn but persistent woman who sells meat pies to keep the family afloat—when she can afford to make them. Poverty and hunger are so widespread that the citizens have begun to stage secret meetings, seeking the parliamentary representation they've long been denied. When renowned political reformer Henry Hunt (Rory Kinnear) comes to Manchester to deliver a big speech, the residents of the city and surrounding towns turn out in hopeful droves to hear him, unaware that the local authorities will stop at nothing to shut them down.

'I am committed—for as long as it is possible to do so—to making motion pictures.'

MIKE LEIGH, to Screen Daily

The climax, as Leigh stages it, is both horrifying and deeply moving. *Peterloo* shows what can happen when tyrants use brute force. It also proves the ineffectiveness of swords and bayonets, or their modern-day counterparts, in breaking the will of the people. —STEPHANIE ZACHAREK

Peterloo *is a story of resilience in the face of brute force*

Jackson and Larson team up once more—with mixed results

MOVIES

The corniest *Unicorn*

BRIE LARSON AND SAMUEL L. JACKSON's second collaboration to debut in 2019 is as different from *Captain Marvel* as movies get. A quirky indie dramedy in the vein of *Garden State, Unicorn Store* casts Larson as Kit, a pastel-clad glitter fiend who fails out of art school. Stuck at home with her parents (Joan Cusack and Bradley Whitford), she takes a tedious temp gig where the boss is a #MeToo story waiting to happen.

That's when the magic begins. Kit receives an anonymous invitation to "The Store"—a deserted church, repurposed as an equine fantasia. The only other soul in the building is "The Salesman" (Jackson in a bubblegum-pink suit, with tinsel in his hair). This quasi-mythical figure has come to help her procure something she's yearned for since childhood: a real, live unicorn to love her unconditionally. She simply has to perform a few tasks to prove she's worthy.

The movie—Larson's directorial debut—is as twee it sounds. But its failure isn't chiefly her fault; in fact, she shows some strong instincts behind the camera, from funny set pieces to restrained direction that cuts the mawkishness of Samantha McIntyre's script. Yet Larson's best efforts can't keep *Unicorn Store* from infantilizing millennials or save Jackson's character from embodying offensive tropes. In its preciousness, the film works against its own solid message: that art and fantasy are as vital for adults as they are for kids. Watching Kit chase unicorns, it's hard not to wish she would just go get an M.B.A. —JUDY BERMAN

PETERLOO: ENTERTAINMENT ONE; UNICORN STORE, THE LEGEND OF COCAINE ISLAND: NETFLIX; HIGH LIFE: A24

MOVIES

Cocaine is a hell of a story

If every society gets the El Dorado myth it deserves, then Netflix's doc *The Legend of Cocaine Island* is probably ours. It begins in Florida (of course), where the financial crisis of the late 2000s has pushed former small-business success story Rodney Hyden into seven-figure debt. In hopes of repaying it, he does something that he now admits was very stupid: with his opioid-addicted buddy Andy in tow, he flies to Culebra, P.R., in search of $2 million worth of cocaine that a neighbor claims to have buried there years earlier. Somehow, the adventure doesn't quite go according to plan.

While the movie raises a few worthwhile questions about the American Dream and the priorities of our never-ending war on drugs, director Theo Love focuses more on the comedic aspects of the debacle—of which there are many. The results are certainly entertaining. But Love's eagerness to wring laughs out of Rodney's ignorance (at one point he's seen typing *cocayn* into a search engine), Andy's druggy mannerisms and the sundry misfortunes of desperate people gets exploitative fast. Did I chuckle? Sure. But I also came out of *Cocaine Island* feeling grimier than a gym bag full of drugs encased in two decades' worth of dirt. —*J.B.*

Florida man Rodney Hyden

Jessie Ross and Robert Pattinson face the unknown in High Life

MOVIES

A man and a baby, lost in space

FRENCH FILMMAKER CLAIRE DENIS IS one of the unsung geniuses of worldwide cinema. Not everyone knows her name, but the movies she's made over the past three decades—like the sensuous, evocative 1999 *Billy Budd* adaptation *Beau Travail,* or *35 Shots of Rum,* from 2008, a drama about makeshift families that reflects the ever changing face of France itself—are so vital and so brazenly varied that you could spend a lifetime splashing in their depths.

Denis's movies can be imaginative and poetic; sometimes they're unflinchingly brutal. *High Life,* her first English-language picture, is all of those things, a work of great beauty that's also at times difficult to watch. Robert Pattinson stars as Monte, a convicted killer who's sent into space as part of a futuristic fertility experiment; the scientist-sorceress in charge is Dr. Dibs (Juliette Binoche), a chilly temptress in a lab coat, who happens to harbor her own criminal secret. *High Life* is a work of dystopian science fiction, unsettling by design: The facility that houses Monte, Dr. Dibs and the other prisoner-subjects (they include André Benjamin—rap luminary André 3000—in a small but potent role) is a drab, cube-like structure, like two shipping containers lashed together, floating dismally through space. But in Denis's vision—and as shot by cinematographer Yorick Le Saux—it's an image of stark, lonely beauty, a metaphor for the desolation felt by the misfits locked inside.

High Life is a chilly, ruminative film, brilliant if not exactly likable. But Pattinson, the movie's thumping heart, is superb: in the opening scene, before we have any scope of what's going on in this lost-in-space horror lab, we see Monte suited up in space gear, attempting a repair on the ship's exterior. He's communicating, by monitor, with a being inside the ship—who happens to be a gurgling infant, the only other human in sight. As the story moves forward, we learn who this baby is and how she and her fellow space traveler are bonded. They're connected to each other but isolated from the world, and they give us something to cling to as well. Pattinson's face alone is a star map of tenderness, suspicion and ruthlessness. In this sometimes alienating movie, he lays a trail for us to follow, sticking close by our side right to the end. —s.z.

FICTION

Confronting demons in a Mennonite colony

By Bethanne Patrick

IT WAS A HISTORIC—AND HORRIFYING—CASE OF GAS-lighting. One hundred thirty Mennonite women and children were drugged and raped in their Bolivian colony over a period of four years, starting in 2005. Their abusers, men in their own community, told the victims, 3 to 60 years old, that their attacks had been perpetrated by ghosts.

Miriam Toews fictionalizes this ugly chapter of history in her latest novel, *Women Talking*. In her version of the story, eight Mennonite women, also in Bolivia, begin to hold secret meetings after suffering repeated violations in 2009. They have just two days before their fathers and husbands return from a trip to a nearby city to bail out their accused attackers, and they must meet in secret to evade those around them who remain loyal to the absent menfolk. Since these women are illiterate, deemed unworthy of education by the men who rule their world, they ask a previously shunned Mennonite man, August Epp, to keep "minutes" of their talks.

The assembled include women from two families, the Loewens and the Friesens. They range from teenagers to grandmothers, from giggling adolescents Autje Loewen and Neitje Friesen to the chain-smoking Mejal Loewen and her irritating mother Greta. Together they must decide: Will they do nothing? Stay and fight? Or leave the only community they've ever known? Ona, a spinster who is pregnant from a rape, encapsulates the stakes for them all: "When we have liberated ourselves, we will have to ask ourselves who we are."

Celebrated Canadian novelist Toews' seventh novel is based on horrific recent history

The author herself was born in a Mennonite community in Manitoba, Canada, and left the group and its religion at 18. Several of her six previous novels, including *A Complicated Kindness* and *Irma Voth,* discuss the problems with the patriarchal Mennonite culture, and *Women Talking* builds on those books.

The novel employs an audacious conceit: While it's a story about women, it anchors its narrative in a man's perspective, as August bears witness to the most private, painful and urgent of the victims' conversations. The reader's only way to learn about these women is through his male voice—a setup that both heightens the injustice of the women's situation and keeps readers at a distance from what they think and feel. But even through the filter of a male narrator, Toews shows us how these women, who can't read or write, are capable of great reasoning and philosophy. They have learned holy writ just as well as the men who control its print.

EACH OF THE OPTIONS they identify in the wake of their abuse is grim, yet the novel as a whole is anything but. Toews infuses the women's humor, from broad to subtle, as the group constructs a plan. Even in the midst of their toughest conversations, they cackle together, daydreaming of a scenario in which they could force the men to sit at school desks wearing dunce caps, and crack sardonic jokes at one another's expense. This group may be isolated from the world, but its members join a long tradition of women bonding in laughter.

And like so many other women, they count on their male peers' belief that because they are women, they will not strike back. Toews calls to mind a long line of underestimated icons, from the fictional Lysistrata to Joan of Arc, who took control of their lives and their communities too—all the while relying on men's blindness to their power. When the elderly Earnest enters and asks jokingly if the women are plotting to burn down his barn, Agata says, "No, Ernie. There's no plot, we're only women talking." One day, Toews suggests, these women—and all the women of the world—will take control, just so long as they keep talking. ◻

TOEWS: CAROL LOEWEN; ROWLEY: MATTHEW ALLARD; MOTHER IS A VERB: CLARA MOKRI FOR TIME

FICTION

Jackie grants guidance

What's more exciting than landing your first book deal? For James Smale, the protagonist of Steven Rowley's latest novel, *The Editor,* it happens to be that the person interested in publishing his manuscript is also a former First Lady. It's 1992 when James, a young gay writer in New York City, walks into Doubleday's office for an initial meeting about his book, which chronicles a tumultuous relationship between a mother and a son. He is stunned to discover that the editor who loves his story is Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis.

Rowley propels James through a journey of self-discovery as his glamorous editor insists he rewrite the ending of his book. When James reveals to Onassis—who really did work in publishing for two decades—that his manuscript is heavily based on his life and has caused a deep rift in his family, she urges him to make things right. Though it's titled *The Editor,* Jackie's role ultimately recedes into the background. James takes center stage to produce a book he hopes will make both her and his mother proud, in what is ultimately a story not about celebrity but about family and forgiveness.

—Annabel Gutterman

Steven Rowley

NONFICTION

The mother side of the story

By Lily Rothman

IT'S SAID THAT HISTORY IS WRITTEN by the victors, but it would also be fair to say it typically isn't written by people who are busy birthing, nursing or tending to babies, victorious though they may be. Such is the challenge faced by Sarah Knott, a historian who sets out to address that imbalance in *Mother Is a Verb,* her new book that blends memoir and history to tell a story of motherhood through the ages.

As Knott describes in an informative note on her methods, traditional history has been summarized as the study of "Men in Public." Here, under the subtitle *An Unconventional History,* are women in private. (Men, including Knott's own supportive but loosely sketched partner, do show up in small roles; she notes that she knows of only a single image from the 17th century of a father holding a baby.) Even the most prodigious writers of the past tended to skip this material, deeming it too mundane or too intimate or both. Accordingly, Knott finds fewer sources on her subject than she'd like, a point she makes early and often. Her admirable effort not to rely only on accounts from rich, straight, white English speakers puts her in even more of a bind.

So, to examine the past several centuries of mothering on both sides of the pond, she uses her own observations on becoming a parent to weave together archival anecdotes. She paints a picture that covers working-class 20th century Londoners and indigenous Americans, that runs from the cabins of enslaved women to the bedrooms of the colonial elite. The book sings when Knott trusts readers to get the meta-historic point, allowing her eye for choice details (the German word, *Ammenschlaf,* for the light sleep of a new mom, or an early 1900s effort to organize a housewives' union) to underline the big ideas on her behalf: much changes; much does not.

She writes of befriending a more experienced mom who can serve as a source of the calming reminder that the baby is new but parenting isn't. Knott also turns to history for the same reassurance, and *Mother,* in turn, extends that hand to the world. By starting with the link between mother and baby, and crawling outward into the link between so many mothers, she shows that while infancy is a time when life is measured in days, in its curves are centuries. ☐

TELEVISION

In *Fosse/Verdon*, a dark pas de deux

By Judy Berman

Verdon (Williams) and Fosse (Rockwell) couldn't live with each other but couldn't work alone

FOR MOST OF THE PAST DECADE, TV NETWORKS have been trying to replicate *Mad Men*. (Remember NBC's *The Playboy Club*? ABC's *Pan Am*?) But these imitators never seemed to understand that beyond the 1960s styling, *Mad Men* resonated because of its deep insight into creative work and the havoc it can wreak on the personal lives of people who devote themselves to it. So it's a minor miracle that FX has managed to create something close to *Mad Men*'s spirit in *Fosse/Verdon*—a miniseries, premiering on April 9, that shares both its lush midcentury setting and its ambitious themes.

You don't need to know much about musical theater (I don't!) to enjoy this eight-episode account of the romantic and professional partnership between legendary choreographer and director Bob Fosse (Sam Rockwell) and triple threat Gwen Verdon (Michelle Williams). Though the show's nonchronological structure might be confusing at first, viewers are in good hands with a team including *Hamilton*'s Lin-Manuel Miranda and Thomas Kail, as well as *Dear Evan Hansen* writer Steven Levenson, whose carefully ordered vignettes examine the relationship from multiple angles.

When they meet, in the mid-'50s, Gwen is the queen of Broadway and Bob is a green choreographer with the gall to make her try out for *Damn Yankees;* a kinetic audition scene shows them falling in love and discovering their electrifying potential as collaborators at once. But *Fosse/Verdon,* which spans half a century, concentrates on a period in the early 1970s when the balance of power between the leads shifts. By then, they have a daughter, Nicole (Juliet Brett), and a New York City apartment decorated in haute-bohemian jewel tones and animal prints. Now a director of movies as well as theater, Bob steamrolls his way into helming *Cabaret,* a smash that wins him an Oscar. At the same time, an aging Gwen struggles to find roles.

Even as his constant infidelity dooms their marriage, Bob—who's better at talking ingenues into bed than he is at talking producers into trusting his vision—relies on his wife's charisma and insight behind the scenes. So she keeps helping him, in an uncredited capacity. And the emptiness of success keeps exacerbating his depression and drug abuse.

YET THERE'S MORE to *Fosse/Verdon* than the familiar story of a saintly woman whose husband passes off her work as his own. Gwen can be a ruthless careerist. In one standout episode, she derails a vacation by incessantly lobbying him to stage *Chicago* with her as the lead, even though he's supposed to be resting after a week in a psychiatric hospital. This neediness isn't about money. Rather, it was work that liberated both Gwen and Bob from traumatic childhoods (which are, frustratingly, condensed into rushed flashbacks meant to show that their pasts still haunt them). And unfortunately for their daughter, who drifts precariously through their adult world, it's mostly work that continues to give their lives meaning.

Rockwell captures Fosse's fragility, anguish and passion, his alternate charm and creepiness with women. But, maybe because guys like him predominate in prestige drama, Gwen resonates more. Williams conveys Verdon's star quality without letting it obscure her steely survivor's core. In *Mad Men* terms, the character is Joan (an underestimated single mom), Betty (a betrayed wife rebuilding her life) and Peggy (a woman who's just as talented and driven as any man in her field) in one.

Gwen is also a genius. And part of the pleasure of *Fosse/Verdon* is in simply watching her work. Kail has said the show chronicles the "collaboration between a woman who, in her prime, was the greatest dancer of her generation and a man who wanted to be Fred Astaire and was not allowed to be." This is only as trivializing to Fosse as Fosse was to Verdon. Though it's more than just a revisionist history, one hopes this elegant miniseries corrects the record. ☐

FOSSE/VERDON: PARI DUKOVIC—FX; KILLING EVE: BBC AMERICA

TELEVISION

New year's *Eve*

NOW IS A GREAT TIME TO REWATCH *Killing Eve*'s Season 1 finale—because Season 2 picks up exactly 30 seconds after its unnerving cliff-hanger. A rare encounter between rogue MI6 operative Eve Polastri (Sandra Oh, fresh off a Golden Globes win) and glamorous, psychotic assassin Villanelle (Jodie Comer) has left our shell-shocked heroine soaked in the blood of her suddenly absent foil.

This image sets the tone for a new season, premiering April 7 on BBC America, that inverts the thriller's original cat-and-mouse game. Now Eve has the upper hand: Having earned the grudging respect of the boss who'd fired her, Carolyn (Fiona Shaw), she's back on the job. And Villanelle is in the hospital, trying to heal, hide and plan her escape from Paris all at once.

It's a canny role reversal, even if Villanelle's plight veers toward melodrama. Such clumsiness may be due to the departure of original lead writer Phoebe Waller-Bridge, whose scripts balanced the glossy spy plot with details grounded in real, mundane life. Her replacement, head writer Emerald Fennell, doesn't seem to grok the characters on such a profound level—though she keeps episodes so fizzy and fast-paced, you hardly notice. Besides, at this point, Oh and Comer so fully inhabit Eve and Villanelle, they could probably carry on without any script at all. *Killing Eve* may no longer be the single best show on TV, as it was in 2018. But it's still the most exhilarating one. —J.B.

'How do you move from a cat and mouse to a cat and cat?'

SANDRA OH, on the challenges of Season 2, in *Entertainment Weekly*

After a bloody season finale, Eve (Oh) cleans up

IF YOU RECEIVED A CASH DISTRIBUTION IN CONNECTION WITH CERTAIN AMERICAN DEPOSITARY RECEIPTS ("ADRS") FOR WHICH CITIBANK N.A. SERVED AS DEPOSITARY OR IF YOU CURRENTLY OWN SUCH ADRS, YOUR RIGHTS MAY BE AFFECTED.

Pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23 and Court Order, *Merryman et al. v. Citigroup, Inc. et al.*, No. 1:15-cv-09185-CM-KNF (S.D.N.Y.) has been provisionally certified as a class action for settlement purposes and a settlement for $14,750,000 in cash and certain additional non-monetary relief has been proposed, which, if approved, will resolve all claims in the litigation. This notice provides basic information. It is important that you review the detailed notice ("Notice") found at the website below.

What is this lawsuit about: Plaintiffs allege that, during the relevant time period, Citibank N.A. (the "Depositary") systematically deducted impermissible fees for conducting foreign exchange from dividends and/or cash distributions issued by foreign companies, and owed to ADR holders. The Depositary has denied, and continues to deny, any wrongdoing or liability whatsoever.

Who is a Class Member: Persons or entities (1) who received cash distributions from the ADRs listed in Appendix 1 to the Notice from January 1, 2006 to September 4, 2018, inclusive, and were damaged thereby (the "Damages Class"); and/or (2) who currently own the ADRs listed in Appendix 1 to the Notice (the "Current Holder Class" and, together with the Damages Class, the "Class").

What are the benefits: If the Court approves the settlement, the proceeds, after deduction of Court-approved notice and administration costs, attorneys' fees and expenses, will be distributed pursuant to the Plan of Allocation in the Notice, or other plan approved by the Court.

If you are a Current Holder Class Member, the Settlement also provides additional non-monetary relief related to the conversion of foreign currency of cash distributions paid by eligible ADR issuers pursuant to a deposit agreement.

What are my rights: If you are a Damages Class Member and you hold (or held) your ADRs directly and are listed on the Depositary's transfer agent records, you are a Registered Holder Damages Class Member and *do not* have to take any action to be eligible for a settlement payment. However, if you hold (or held) your ADRs through a bank, broker or nominee and are not listed on the Depositary's transfer agent records, you are a Non-Registered Holder Damages Class Member and you *must submit* a Claim Form, ***postmarked by August 12, 2019***, to be eligible for a settlement payment. Non-Registered Holder Damages Class Members who do nothing will not receive a payment, and will be bound by all Court decisions.

If you are a Class Member and do not want to remain in the Class, you may exclude yourself by request, ***received by June 7, 2019***, in accordance with the Notice. If you exclude yourself, you will *not* be bound by any Court decisions in this litigation and you will *not receive a payment*, but you will retain any right you may have to pursue your own litigation at your own expense concerning the settled claims. Objections to the settlement, Plan of Allocation, or request for attorneys' fees and expenses must be ***received by June 7, 2019***, in accordance with the Notice.

A hearing will be held on **July 12, 2019 at 10:00 a.m.**, before the Honorable Colleen McMahon, at the Daniel Patrick Moynihan United States Courthouse, 500 Pearl Street, New York, NY 10007, to determine if the settlement, Plan of Allocation, and/or request for fees and expenses should be approved. Supporting papers will be posted on the website once filed.

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8 Questions

Suzan-Lori Parks The Pulitzer Prize–winning playwright on adapting classics, the black avant-garde and how much of the world is a stage

You've adapted several American masterworks, most recently *Native Son*, which is out April 6 on HBO. How intimidating is that process? I find it joyful. With *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, I basically got to walk in the footsteps of the great one. I felt like I got to hold the hand of Zora Neale Hurston and say, "Sister, what would you like?" *Native Son* is beautiful and compelling and moving and frightening. Richard Wright already invented the wheel. My job as the adapter is to roll the wheel forward.

Your new play, *White Noise*, at New York City's Public Theater, explores how gaining power and privilege can make a person more oppressive. Have you seen that happen? Yes, and to most people in this country—black, white or other. How many times have we thrown shade at the bus driver, the teacher, the cashier at the grocery store? How do we use our privilege—whether it's a college education or just running water—as an oppressive weapon?

You're the showrunner for National Geographic's next season of *Genius*, about Aretha Franklin. What does she mean to you? A lot of things. We think of "Respect," the hits and gospel songs. But she was very private. She had an enormous struggle that she did not put front and center.

Does your approach vary when you write for different media? When I'm writing a movie, I try to turn on the projector in my head. With a play, I have to be in the room with the characters. I might follow the story as if it were a person and I'm walking after them. They might slip around a corner, and I have to catch them. I'm a visceral, from-my-guts kind of writer. I don't have ideas, per se. I can tell you the story. But what it means? That's for the audience.

You famously wrote 365 plays in 365 days. What did it teach you about playwriting? That plays are always happening—like right now. We're co-creating the action and dialogue. Like Shakespeare said, all the world's a stage. I look outside and see kids on the playground. That's a play. There's scaffolding in front of my window with workmen fixing something. That's a play too.

"I CAN TELL YOU THE STORY. BUT WHAT IT MEANS? THAT'S FOR THE AUDIENCE"

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You have a Pulitzer Prize, and the New York *Times* recently named *Topdog/Underdog* the best American play since *Angels in America*. What kind of affirmation means the most to you? The outside affirmation is very important, because it allows me to continue in the public sphere. But it's not more or less important than when I say to myself, "Good job." Friends often say to me, "Are you ever afraid of being found out to be a fraud?" I've never had that feeling. When I get an award or an honor, I know I have done the work.

How has black art changed over the 30-plus years you've been working? When I started out, there were only a handful of artists of African descent who were considered avant-garde, to my knowledge. The black community at large was not accepting of stuff that was outside the more traditional forms. It's not that I wanted to be avant-garde—that was just the way my words were coming out. Now there are more voices who are breaking form, because they realize the form perhaps doesn't serve the story of the lives we're living.

Are you conscious of the fact that much of the audience at your plays is white? Yes. But they're ready to do the work. It might still freak them out, but they are excited by the engagement that I'm asking of them. The spoon-feeding times are over. My job, to quote James Baldwin [her former teacher], is to make you conscious of the things you don't see. Because I love you. And because I want all of us, in this country and on this planet, to succeed.

—ANDREW R. CHOW

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